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WOMEN'S BEAUTY IN THE HISTORY OF TANZANIA

By

REHEMA JONATHAN NCHIMBI

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
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Supervisors: Prof. Sandra Klopper (University of Cape Town/University of Stellenbosch).

Prof. Michael Godby (University of Cape Town).

Prof. Amandina Lihamba (University of Dar es Salaam).

NOVEMBER 2005.

DECLARATION

I, Rehema Jonathan Nchimbi declare that this thesis is my original work and that it has not been presented and will not be presented to any other University for a similar or any other degree award.

Signed:

Signed by candidate

.....
Rehema Jonathan Nchimbi.

30TH NOVEMBER 2015
Date:.....

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to

My father, the late Jonathan Oswin Reuben Ngahugha Matengo, who, while I was in Standard Two, said to me; '*Nitakusomesha mpaka Makerere*'.

Mwl. J.K. Nyerere

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And

All the Tanzanian women and women world wide, in whose wombs conceptions of women's beauty sprout.

ABSTRACT

Beauty, in particular, women's beauty, has been a preoccupation of human societies throughout history. Encompassing not only physical appearance, but also aspects of dress and adornment and, in some contexts, more abstract notions like morality and spirituality, notions of beauty are shaped by complex social, cultural and economic considerations. By focusing on specific case studies, this study investigates the history of beauty in Tanzania, taking into account both past and present debates on the role female beauty plays in human relations.

The study is divided into six chapters. Chapter One provides a background to both historical and contemporary concepts of beauty and outlines the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the thesis. In Chapter Two a short overview of Tanzania's history provides a framework for understanding the material discussed in the four subsequent chapters. In this chapter, particular attention is paid to changing policies under the colonial and post-colonial governments, and the impact these policies had on both rural and urban communities. Chapter Three focuses partly on the Mbugwe as an example of a pre-colonial rural society where concepts of female beauty were shaped by indigenous values and concerns, above all the reproductive roles of women. In Chapter Four, the impact of colonialism on transformations of indigenous notions of beauty is discussed with particular reference to Arusha, Tanzania's northern capital, and the Maasai communities who originally occupied this area. Chapter Five investigates the reinvention of female identities in Dar es Salaam through the globalisation of increasingly commodified notions of female beauty, taking account of changes in state policies in the course of the 1980s. Chapter Six discusses the political economy of beauty contests in contemporary Tanzania, highlighting the Tanzanian government's efforts to monitor and control these pageants in part because of its self-appointed role in promoting greater equity for women in the post-independence period, and finally Chapter Seven provides a conclusion of the study.

Three main approaches to data collection were followed, namely a field survey, archival research and a literature review. The field survey was used to secure primary

interview material from a cross-section of respondents in both rural and urban areas, notably Mbugwe, Arusha and Dar es Salaam. In Dar es Salaam qualitative and quantitative data was collected using participatory approaches such as focused group discussions and in-depth interviews. In addition to this an informants' workshop was organised with the aim of provoking collective recollection of historical processes. This helped to verify oral data collected through individual interviews.

The thesis reveals that while beauty is sometimes viewed as an abstract concept that is difficult to define, it has always been a very important cultural resource for communities living in present-day Tanzania. Over time, these concepts have become increasingly hybrid as communities interact with one another, and through the massive impact global notions of beauty have had on indigenous values and concepts in recent years. As the thesis also demonstrates, however, these indigenous values and concepts have in many cases not only survived, but also thrived in new and sometimes quite unexpected ways.

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University of Cape Town

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Beauty, in particular women's beauty, has been a preoccupation of human societies throughout history (Barnes and Eicher, 1992: 1).¹ Although often associated with moral values, concepts of beauty are rooted in the physical appearance and bodily presentation of individual and their societies (Craig, 1994; Jeffes, 1998; Hatfield and Sprecher, 1986).² As Eicher and Roach-Higgins (1992: 15) point out, however, what people understand by physical appearance fluctuates from one context to another. In some situations it is used to indicate qualities of the 'natural body', while in other cases it refers to characteristics of the body and any direct body modifications, such as skin colour and hair.

The term, physical appearance, is also used to refer to a totality consisting of body and garments, jewellery, and other forms of adornment. According to Eicher and Roach-Higgins (1992: 15), these fluctuations introduce ambiguity into the concept, and therefore limit the usefulness of the term 'physical appearance' in discussions of dress, and of body characteristics. Concepts of female beauty incorporating these divergent notions of physical appearance are informed by a host of factors, leading to endless debates regarding the role beauty plays in peoples' perceptions (past and present) not only of themselves, but also of others.

¹ An artefact found at the Blombos Cave, 30 meters above the sea on the coast of South Africa, suggests that Stone Age people used lipstick made from red ochre more than 70,000 years ago. The *New Scientist* (13 October, 2001: 42). See, also, <http://www.newscientist.com>.

² Eicher and Barnes (1992: 1) argue that the decorative ornaments that are added to the body such as earrings, bracelets, and finger rings, or markings imposed such as tattoo, or paint show a person's position within the society, thus, 'a cultural identity is ... expressed, and visual communication is established'.

In 1961, the newly independent government of Tanganyika (Tanzania mainland) encouraged the adoption of notions of female beauty consistent with the intention of building a national identity. This led to the launch of 'Operation *Kaburure*',³ which allowed policemen and militia to monitor the clothing styles of both men and women, and to force those wearing mini skirts and tight jeans to change into more decorous, local styles that were regarded as acceptable by the government (Ivaska, 2004: 104-105). Soon thereafter, in 1968, the 'Miss Tanzania' beauty contestants were also banned from wearing bell-bottoms and mini-skirts because these forms of dress were said to undermine attempts to promote Tanzania's indigenous culture and customs (Ivaska, 2004: 108).⁴

Much latter, and for very different reasons, in 1996 the Ministry of Health tried to ban certain soaps and cosmetics that were claimed to contain mercury.⁵ But despite this official intervention, beauty shops continued to sell items like these and beauty shops and beauty centres have mushroomed throughout the country in recent years.⁶ Likewise, beauty pageants have become commonplace in contemporary Tanzania, ranging from the Miss Pilsner Ice and Miss *Mazulia* contests, to the Miss Tourism and the M'Net Face of Africa pageants.

Throughout this period, debates regarding the materials and practices associated with contemporary notions of beauty have gained momentum. Newspapers now commonly carry headlines on issues of beauty such as who women dress for and whether beauty

³ Also, interviews with Mzee Rashidi Masimbi of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Dar es Salaam, 24/4/2001, 6/6/2002.

⁴ Also, interviews with Mzee Rashidi Masimbi of the Ministry of education and Culture and Hashim Lundenga, Dar es Salaam, 10/4/2001, 2/6/2002.

⁵ *Rai* (September 17 to 23, 1998).

⁶ *The Express* (September 18 to 24, 1997).

contestants should be allowed to parade half naked on stage.⁷ One recent article⁸ even focused on the fact that the bad smelling curled hair of one passenger forced other passengers to abandon a *Daladala*.⁹

Articles on beauty contests have become particularly common in recent years. Dealing with a range of issues, these articles address anything from the inability of some contestants to express themselves in English,¹⁰ why the Miss East Africa 1998 was not awarded,¹¹ and whether it is worth the effort for African contestants to enter the Miss World competition.¹² Other topics include the use and proper application of make-up, and the health problems caused by certain products.¹³

Despite these comparatively new developments, earlier, pre-colonial practices of beauty have in many cases survived, particularly in rural areas. With the exception of the Maasai, the survival of these practices has for the most part enjoyed the support of Tanzania's post-independent government. Associated with the idea of preserving and displaying the country's national culture and identity, this official support has contributed significantly to the on-going interest in indigenous concepts of beauty in contemporary Tanzania. National festivals and political rallies play a key role in the public display and appreciation of this type of beauty.

⁷ *The Observer* (April 27, 1997); *The Guardian* (August 8, 1997).

⁸ *Alasiri* (January 13, 1999).

⁹ *Daladala* is the local Tanzanian name for commuter busses. This term originated from the Tanzanian five shillings fare charged for a single trip, which in the late 1970s was equivalent to one American Dollar (*dala*).

¹⁰ *Dimba* (August 30 to September 5, 1998).

¹¹ *Spoti Starehe* (January 3 to 9, 1999).

¹² *The Observer* (November 29, 1998).

¹³ *Mtanzania* (August 30, 1998).

Indigenous forms of dress, adornment and cosmetic preparations have also become a rich resource for attracting tourists, while wedding ceremonies in the city of Dar es Salaam now borrow from and emulate long-established local customs on how to prepare a bride for her wedding, what attire she should wear, and what kind of dancing should accompany the wedding ceremony. Older women from the Kigoma region have become popular instructors at the 'kitchen parties'¹⁴ that precede these hybrid celebrations. Likewise, Maasai clothing and hairstyles have become increasingly popular among other, non-Maasai Tanzanians in recent years.

As both contemporary Tanzanian newspaper articles and the scholarly literature (Ivaska, 2004: 104-121; Fair, 2004: 13-30) on this subject indicate, people often have very divergent ideas regarding beauty. For some, it is a commodity that can be bought and sold. For others, beauty is socially and culturally constructed. And in many cases individual conceptions of beauty compete with those promoted by the State. Likewise, there are conflicting views on the role beauty plays in the lives of particular people and the communities to which they belong. These range from the idea that beauty is a mechanism for identity formation, to notions of beauty as a form of power and prestige.

Taking account of these and other notions of beauty, this study traces key aspects of the history and transformation of concepts of women's beauty in Tanzania. In doing so, it seeks to contribute not only to a better understanding of notions of female beauty in Tanzania's past and present, but, through an analysis of these concepts, to provide a culturally sensitive understanding of key aspects of the country's social and

¹⁴ Interview with Shani Kitogo, Dar es Salaam, 19/4/2001, 25/6/2002, 28/7/2002, and Mama Mtu Mzima, Dar es Salaam, 19/4/2001, 14/6/2002, 4/8/2003.

political history. To achieve this aim this study relies on three main approaches to data collection: a field survey, archival research and a literature review.

The collection of primary data was undertaken in both rural areas - mainly the Mbugwe region - and urban centres, notably Arusha and Dar es Salaam. Qualitative as well as quantitative data was collected using participatory approaches such as focused group discussions and in-depth interviews.¹⁵ A total of 72 people over the age of 50 were interviewed because their insights into more traditional concepts of beauty were crucial to this study. In addition to this group, 32 people aged between 31 and 50, and 42 younger people, aged between 10 and 30, were consulted on a number of issues and perceptions regarding the more recent history of beauty in Tanzania. Further interviews were conducted with people working in the media; the owners of, and assistants working in beauty shops/centres; and the organisers, sponsors and coordinators of beauty contests such as 'Miss Aspen' competition and the 'M-Net Face of Africa'. A workshop aimed at provoking collective recollection of historical processes was also organised. This workshop was attended by randomly selected representatives from different age groups. All interviews were recorded.

Relevant documentary material was collected in the Tanzania National Archives and the University of Dar es Salaam's library. District Books, secretariat files and colonial government records were also studied. Other sources consulted for this study included Internet websites and journals, magazines and newsletters. Extensive use was also made of photographic data and other visual sources, such as programmes presented on Tanzania's TV stations.

¹⁵ See the List of respondents in Appendix. 3.

The literature on the history of concepts of beauty has proliferated in recent years, often extending beyond the more obvious considerations of beauty contained in now classical European studies like Kenneth Clarke's The Nude (1953). Judging from this literature, some scholars (Jackson, 1992) are convinced that beauty cannot be defined or described. According to Jackson (1992:2), 'an attractive face is nothing more than a face that most people consider attractive'. Viewed from this perspective, beauty is associated with the idea of giving pleasure to the senses (Eco, 2004: 8-10).

This understanding of beauty is supported by Ruth Phillips (1995: 105) who argues that physical beauty is an active quality that enhances the person's personality. As she and others have also pointed out, it enables women, in particular, to capture the attention of the public, accumulate wealth and influence other people (Craik, 1994: 1).

The focus on the physical evidenced in these studies on contemporary perceptions of beauty can be traced back to the writings of Plato (Wiener, 1998:196), who maintained that the quality of beauty manifests itself in measure, proportion and symmetry, and in the harmony of the parts to the whole. Aristotle (Wiener, 1998) argued likewise that the component elements of beauty are order, symmetry and definiteness.¹⁶ According to Umberto Eco (1986:19-20), these elements must be considered in their totality. 'The withdrawal of any one of them will disjoin and dislocate the whole' (Wiener, 1998: 196). This perspective is supported much later on by Saint Augustine (Wiener, 1998:197), who dwelt on issues of colour, sound, fitness and loveliness.

¹⁶ See, also, Umberto Eco (1986: 18-27).

A similar preoccupation with the physical is reflected in a recent British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) survey which suggests that beauty is associated with ‘the symmetry of a face, its perfect proportion, or indeed its averageness where no feature stands out....’. According to this survey, the desire for averageness is inextricably linked to finding a healthy partner with whom to reproduce’.¹⁷ This suggests that there is a strong correlation between physical appearance and perceptions of biological fitness or health.

Despite this seemingly timeless attention to the physical, most concepts of beauty are rooted in specific historical process and experiences (Marwick, 1988: 1). As Monroe (Wiener, 1998:195-196) points out ‘...the quality called beautiful is not the same all the time and for all persons...’. On the contrary, a variety of factors influence people’s perceptions of beauty (Eco, 2004: 12-13). Ideas about beauty are informed above all by social, economic and cultural relations that change, not only over time, but also from one context to another. It is relevant to note in this regard that the global feminist scholar Chandra Mohanty, highlights the importance of inquiries that are “grounded in the relations between gender, race, class and sexuality at a particular historical moment” (1991: 21). As she points out

Feminist struggles are waged on at least two simultaneous, interconnected levels: an ideological, discursive level which addresses questions of representation...and a material, experiential, daily-life level which focuses on the micropolitics of work, home, family, sexuality, etc (1991: 21).

She goes on to argue that

The existence of third world women’s narratives in itself is not evidence of decentring hegemonic histories and subjectivities. It is

¹⁷ See <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/329127>.

the way in which they are read, understood, and located institutionally which is of paramount importance. After all, the point is not just 'to record' one's history of struggle, or of consciousness, but how they are recorded; the way we read, receive, and disseminate such imaginative records is immensely significant" (1991: 34).

Arguments for a contextual understanding of women's struggles, and of changing historical conceptions of beauty notwithstanding, it has been suggested that (Wiener, 1998: 210) beauty is imaginary, i.e. it results from cognitive understanding, and is therefore essentially a mental creation. According to this view, variations in peoples' conceptions of beauty can be attributed to factors like age, culture, taste and experience.¹⁸

The relationship between concepts of beauty and gender has been discussed at length by writers like Jackson (1992). According to her, the gendered division of labour and other social roles has a major impact on how beautiful women are perceived in most societies, where they are often expected to fulfil primarily sexual and reproductive responsibilities. For this reason, attributes such as breast size and other physical aspects like the shape of a woman's waist, hips, legs, chest, height, age, weight, colour, and physical fitness are used to define her beauty. Thus, for example, a woman with smooth skin and clear eyes might be considered more beautiful than one lacking these qualities. At least in some cases, this is because complexion can denote health and therefore the capacity to give birth to healthy children who will secure the future existence of the group through their own reproductive potential. Jackson (1992) also lists intellectual competence and the ability to adapt to different social

¹⁸ See, also, Ebrahim-Vally, R. (2001: 1-9).

circumstances as widely accepted attributes of beauty. But these supposed attributes are obviously neither universal, nor static.¹⁹

The relationship between notions of female beauty and the particular concerns of individual communities is highlighted by Sylvia Boone in her consideration of African ideals of feminine beauty among the Mende (1986: 59), where body weight plays a crucial role in the group's understanding of the ideal woman. Boone suggests that the significance this community ascribes to weight can be attributed to the fact that it triggers menarche in girls and helps to prepare the body for the exigencies of pregnancy and lactation. She also identifies singing and the ability to perform an unusually difficult dance as attributes of beauty among the Mende. In other words, concepts of beauty are often linked not only to women's reproductive potential but also to their socialisation. This explains why, among the Mende, girls of four and five are closely observed for signs of innate musical abilities and other talents that are subsequently developed when they attend puberty initiation rites. According to Boone, excellence in dancing and singing ultimately enhances a Mende girl's chances for successful marriage and for attaining wealth and fame. In other words, in this context beauty is associated with the values of prosperity, fertility and health (Boone, 1986: 75).

Boone's consideration of Mende concepts of beauty has been criticised (see, Phillips, 1995) for its essentialist approach to ethnicity and its personal focus. While the importance of this critique cannot be ignored, her study provides several crucial points of departure for others seeking to study concepts of beauty and beauty contests in

¹⁹ See, also, Wilson, E. (2003: 117); Jeffes, S. (1998). Also Johnson, D. (1983).

Africa. Most importantly, she tries to address the specific ways in which particular groups develop concepts of beauty, and the need to find ways of understanding these concepts without relying on alien or external models of analysis.

Culturally coded perceptions of desirable body mass and skin colour are common throughout history. A good example is the current preference given to young, thin women in middle class societies (Bordo, 1993). It is claimed that these thin women are active and attractive, encouraging a growing link between self-esteem and body size (Chapkis, 1988). According to Jackson (1992: 161), thinness is considered more masculine, reflects greater personal control and therefore gives contemporary middle class women a sense that they can usurp the monopoly men historically had over power and status in the public domain.

But this emphasis on a 'thin ideal' is certainly not universal (Kanin, 1990). In some societies like the Mende example discussed by Boone, a fat woman was (and sometimes still is) considered to be fertile. This explains why in many other African contexts girls continue to enter 'fattening houses' at puberty to prepare them for marriage and reproduction.²⁰ Among the Banyankole of Uganda girls are forbidden to work and are given quantities of milk in preparation for marriage even before puberty because: 'The fatter she grew the more beautiful she was considered and her condition was a marked contrast to that of the men, who were athletic and well-developed' (Cassidy, 1991: 195). Likewise, adolescent girls were made more beautiful and fertile

²⁰ Brides-to-be are sent to 'fattening houses' in many different communities. See, for example, the practice among some Nigerians, where girls must look plump, and thus beautiful, on their wedding day. See <http://www.newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/32917>.

among the Kissi of Upper Volta and the Mangaia of Oceania²¹ through a fattening procedure (Cassidy, 1991: 195). Among these groups, girls with heavy shoulders, hips, and buttocks were believed to have the most endurance and vitality during sex.

Like Kanin, Boone and Cassidy, several other writers have argued that beauty performs very particular functions in society, often upholding patriarchal structures of control and authority. Thus, for example, in religious texts such as the Bible and the Koran, beauty is associated with notions of propriety fitting to the domestic and reproductive roles ascribed to women in these texts. In the Bible the functions of a beautiful wife (woman) are outlined as follows:

She extends her hand to the poor, yes she reaches out her hands to the needy. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. She opens her mouth with wisdom and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her households and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also and he praises her (Proverbs, Chapter 31: 20, 23, 26, 27, 28).

These desirable achievements and priorities of beauty are also evident in Islamic texts.

In a poetic speech given by a grandmother to a bride, she is told:

Of God and His Prophet, father and mother you know and the fifth is your husband, you should have good manners and a skilled tongue, so that you are a loved person wherever you enter. Make yourself affable through words which are not guileful nor should you be malicious such that people will hate you. You should praise your husband so his reputation spreads. But you should not insist of him that which he cannot produce. If he gets sleepy, do not leave him or mention it by cry but stay right there, don't get up when he rouses...you shouldn't rest, provide him with sustenance, satisfy him and care for his body, massage him and bathe him (Tayoub, 1999:77-78).

²¹ According to Cassidy (1991: 195) A young Mangaian woman 'with plenty of flesh and large hips... a 'bed with a mattress', in contrast to her slenderer sister... a 'bed without a mattress.'

In this tradition (Tayoub, 1999: Hajjaji-Jarrah, 2003: 181-213),²² beautiful women are expected to act as a link and mediator between God, nature and society through motherhood, responsiveness, the proper use of the power of speech, self-control, loyalty, love, wisdom, intellect, perseverance and the maintenance of good relations with other people. As in many biblical texts, the focus is on the beauty of married women, who are encouraged to serve others, notably their husbands.

Beauty with a purpose also underlines the philosophy behind the Miss World organisation, which raises millions of British pounds annually to assist needy children throughout the world. Among the many recipients of funds from this organisation are the Nelson Mandela Trust and a number of International clubs for children. In addition to this, countries participating in the Miss World pageant receive donations for local underprivileged and handicapped children.²³ Viewed from this perspective, contestants could be said to serve the interests of their communities. Obviously, though, the Miss World Pageant is first and foremost a very successful business, and although it seeks to improve its public image through these acts of charity, modern beauty contests have virtually nothing in common with earlier concepts of beauty that stressed the importance of social and cultural bonds through marriage.

The fact that this and other contemporary pageants disqualify contestants who are married highlights the growing tendency to a move away from celebrating women's roles as wives and home-makers. In 2003, the crown of Miss India, Lakish Pandit, was cancelled after reports in the media that she was married.²⁴ Since the celebration of seemingly available, youthful models is obviously central to the role beauty

²² See, also, Farsy, M. S. (1960/1982) *Kurwa na Doto*.

²³ See <http://www.missworld.tv/beautyWithAPu.../charities.sps>.

²⁴ See http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_a.

pageants have come to play in the promotion of cosmetics and the rapidly growing globalised fashion industry, it is inconceivable to allow married women, however young, to participate in them.

Despite the contemporary global imperative for concepts of beauty to become more homogenous, it is important to note that beauty continues to play a significant role in class relations. A good example of this is the importance ascribed to English in advertisements for beauty in contemporary Tanzania and elsewhere. English is used to differentiate so-called civilised, i.e. educated middle class people, from people lower down the social and economic scale. The use of particular terms has been especially influential in sustaining ideas of social, cultural and psychological inferiority (Fowler, 1997: 3-5). In Tanzania, advertisements include loaded references like: 'Every successful wife will choose Revola' (soap); 'The dress for a successful look'; and 'Clever women choose Satin Shine for beautiful and modern hair'.²⁵ The ideas of beauty promoted through the powerful economic interests of multinational companies nevertheless extend dominant notions of beauty across class boundaries by encouraging those lower down the social scale to embrace middle class values and perceptions (Fowler, 1997; Palumbo-Liu and Gumbrecht, 1997).

Needless to say, the consequences of the power multinational companies now exert over the global beauty industry are far-reaching. Increasingly, the images and meanings embodied in such things as dress styles, hair styles, beauty creams, shoes, and the size of women's bodies cross national borders. But this does not mean that earlier concepts of beauty have necessarily been lost or forgotten. Instead, indigenous

²⁵ See, also, Burke (1996: 125-165); Craik (1994: 153-175); Shiraz (2001: 10-38).

concepts are in some cases preserved alongside other, new ideals that together serve to express aspects of the social, cultural and economic needs of the time (Eicher and Erekosima, 1995: 143; Maynard, 2002: 190-193; Allman, 2004: 5).²⁶ According to Palumbo-Liu and Gumbrecht (1997: 14) the internationalisation²⁷ of concepts of beauty promoted through changing clothing fashions and access to other commodities 'is actually to a large extent the product of the eminently national context in which (beauty) is reconfigured'. It is through this process of reconfiguration, they argue, that class differences tend to emerge and that a middle merchant class is often created.

The role contemporary middle class communities play in disseminating values of beauty across class boundaries leads to the transformation of local space and the insertion of local communities into wider markets, both national and beyond (Jackson, 1992). Fowler (1997: 75) refers to this process of compression, leading to increasing uniformity, global patterns of consumption and homogeneous cultural attitudes as 'cultural eclecticism', such that:

One wakens to reggae, watches a Western movie, eats MacDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume manufactured in Tokyo and clothes made in Hong Kong...

Middle class women, in particular, have become key agents for the contemporary beauty industry. This is mainly because these women play an active role in the social, cultural and economic structures from which beauty acquires its meanings, but also

²⁶ For example, Kalabari men and women have found ways to manipulate imported items of dress and textiles to create meaning for members of their society in a changing world (Eicher and Erekosima, 1995: 143). See, also, Bradby (1986: 93-127).

²⁷ Eicher and Sumberg (1995: 295-296) suggest that the terms 'world fashion' or 'cosmopolitan fashion' are probably more apt when referring to fashions resulting from a global interjection of fashions from different cultural origins. See, also, Finkelsten, J. (1996).

because they have the financial means to purchase commodities that promote associations between beauty, wealth and power (Nader, 1986: 3).²⁸

The globalisation of mass communications media, western fashions and Hollywood films have all played a significant role in entrenching middle class ideas of beauty, including the idea that thin is beautiful regardless of age: 'the more they are exposed to western media, the more they buy into it'.²⁹ Thinness, more than being regarded as a modern form of fashion, is now regarded as an indication of the ability to afford high-quality foods and of being educated to recognise the value of consuming these comparatively expensive products. By comparison, fatness is equated with people who opt for cheap fatty junk food, either out of ignorance or economic necessity (Kanin, 1990: 57; Nader, 1986: 69).³⁰

The relationship between this contemporary emphasis on thinness, leading to the employment of super-thin models by the international fashion industry, and the growth of Anorexia nervosa³¹ among young girls is well documented (Bordo, 1993). Intentional self-starvation of this kind deprives the body of protein and prevents the normal metabolism of fat. The effects include:

An irregular heart beat caused by a change in the heart muscle...(which) can lead to heart failure and death, ceasing of menstruation, dehydration, kidney stones and kidney failure, the growth of fine downy body hair, called lanugo, on the face and arms, wasting away of muscles, leading to weakness, constipation or bowel irritation, osteoporosis caused by lack of calcium.³²

²⁸ See, for example, Haug (1986: 47) and Fowler (1997: 2).

²⁹ See <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/329127>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ One disease associated with excessive weight loss is 'osteoporosis brittle bone'. *Mtanzania* (August 30, 1998) sites the case of Anna Packham (19) who used to live on coffee, soup and apples. She also developed problems with her menstrual cycle because her oestrogen hormone levels were disturbed. See, also, Thone, R. R. (1997).

³² See <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/medical>.

As this comparatively recent phenomenon demonstrates, it is often through the body that people signal key social and psychological concerns. By modifying the body through diet and exercise and through the use of clothing, jewellery and make-up, people communicate many things besides their age and sex (Bordo, 1993: 165; Byfield, 2004: 32-33). One's body can denote one's position in the social hierarchy, such as the totally opposite idea in certain social contexts and communities that bigness symbolises the power of dominance. A good example of the latter, now less common way of display of wealth, including the wearing of clothes that emphasize the body's bulk, is Aditi Gowitrikar, who moved between extremes of thinness and fatness. She was obliged to become thin to perfect her role as a catwalk model, but as a film actress, she was required to change shape to look round and fat.³³

Actual body modifications have, of course, also become increasingly common in recent decades through the growing tendency among affluent societies to resort to plastic surgery (Bordo, 1993: 25). Jackson (1992: 204) provides the following interesting statistics for the USA in 1983:

...31,000 men and women had eyelid surgery (blepharoplasty), 73,000 had their noses reshaped (rhinoplasty), 42,000 had a face-lift (rhytidectomy), 13,000 had dermabrasion/chemical peel, and 15,000 had collagen injections to remove wrinkles and acne scars.

Although gender is not mentioned in citing these statistics, women still constitute the overwhelming majority in each category. Radical body modifications are certainly not new, however. In some societies, and especially among women from pastoralist³⁴ communities, the practice of lengthening one's neck by layering metal rings between

³³ See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/medical_notes/1079435.

³⁴ Among pastoralist being tall is both an aspect for beauty and convenient asset that allows one to see further when grazing animals.

the collar bone and the chin is regarded as the greatest sign of beauty. Likewise, to this day, girls among the Wakerewe of the Mwanza region in Tanzania have their clitorises lengthened, and are given instructions by older women in how to achieve orgasm.³⁵

In many communities, the sexual desirability and therefore the beauty of young girls is enhanced by modifying the colour of their skins.³⁶ Among the Zaramo of the coastal region in Tanzania, for example, the skin of the 'bride-to-be' was lightened through the use of various preparations, and girls were kept in seclusion and were made to sit in the shade as much as possible (Swantz, 1986: 193-198). These girls were bathed with warm water and then their bodies were massaged with a mixture of coconut dregs and maize chaff.³⁷ This girls' seclusion was said to serve the function of protecting them against possible pre-marital sex, thus highlighting the role virginity has played in perceptions of female beauty among many societies, past and present.³⁸ In contemporary middle class societies, however, the social and sometimes moral importance formerly ascribed to virginity has all but disappeared.

Although people have been using cosmetics throughout history (Craik, 1994: 153; Nader, 1986: 1; Power, 2001), Wolf (1991) suggests that contemporary attitudes to cosmetics are also informed by a 'new' ideology. She offers the suggestive analysis

³⁵ Interview with (names withheld), Dar es Salaam, 19/4/2001, 14/6/ 2002, 25/6/2002, 4/8/2003, 17/8/2003.

³⁶ African-American women go for 'dermabrasion', which involves the stripping away of upper layers of skin with electronically high-speeded diamond-edge brushes to overcome stigmatization the complex colour politics that continues to inform African American communities. See <http://www.africasia.com.icpubs>. See, also, Davis, K. (1995) *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*.

³⁷ Interview with Shani Kitogo, Mama Mtu Mzima, Bi Shukuru, and Binti Zawadi, Dar es Salaam, 19/4/2001, 14/6/ 2002, 25/6/2002, 4/8/2003.

³⁸ According to Swantz (1986: 197) 'I know of seclusion periods similar to those practiced by the Zaramo among the Luguru, Ngulu, Zigua, Kwere, Doe, Gogo, Ndengereko, Rufiji, Vidunda, Kaguru, and among several of the southern ethnic groups....The Gogo seclusion is 1-2 months.'

that while the marketing of products like these seem to fulfil male fantasies, they actually serve to secure the needs of advertisers. In other words, the producers of cosmetics are constantly engaged in aggressive efforts to promote and sell their wares. In this process, more traditional self-images are destroyed and a new, global image determined by the producers is imposed on consumers.

Responding to the dictates of the contemporary beauty industry women have, in many cases, become victims manipulated by market forces beyond their control (Hatfield and Sprecher, 1986; Nader, 1986; Kanin, 1990; Bordo, 1993; Rooks, 1993). This includes women who have gained economic and political power in contemporary urban communities, but who succumb to the power of large multinational companies seeking to market industrially manufactured items of beauty through increasingly subtle and sophisticated advertising campaigns. On the other hand, as Peiss suggests, one should not ignore the agency of women in this history of the beauty industry (Peiss, 1999)

Coupled to this has been the development of electronic media such as computer graphics and the internet, which has facilitated the production and circulation of particular kinds of images that are fast overtaking the control local social and cultural agents once had over the dissemination of concepts of beauty in different societies. If one switches on the TV in many parts of Africa today, one is often confronted, not by African women, but a world that has been overtaken by pale-skinned and even blonde presenters or news readers. As Eicher and Sumberg (1995: 295) point out: '...television and print media are pervasive and are also influential on many people, even those who never travel beyond their national or even regional boundaries'. The

impact these new media have had on the lives of people throughout the contemporary world is decisive, leading to far-reaching social and cultural transformations in communities across the globe (Jackson 1992; Nader, 1986: 70).

In most communities, urban women now strive to attain the skin colour and bodily perfection depicted in the mass media, believing that this will somehow make them socially more adequate.³⁹ The racism inherent in colonialism thus lives on in many post-colonial societies where pale skins are still favoured. As such, the legacy of colonialism has become part of the collective unconscious and consciousness of many 'black' communities (Rooks, 1993).

A notorious Indian advertisement dating 2000, known as 'the air hostess ad', reflects these racist sentiments:

It showed a young, dark-skinned girl's father lamenting he had no son to provide for him, as his daughter's salary was not high enough, the suggestion being that she could neither get a better job or get married because of her dark skin.⁴⁰

The advertisement concluded with the girl using 'Fair and Lovely' cream, after which she became fairer and qualified for a better-paying job as an air hostess, thus making her father happy.

Contemporary advertisements for skin lightening creams, commonly found throughout Africa, are generally very alluring, hiding the truth about the health

³⁹ As Freedman (1986) has noted, this process begins with the adolescent search of a personal identity that has been distorted into a search for pre-packaged media images.

⁴⁰ This advertisement fuelled a debate in India about its racist connotation. See http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_a. See, also, Behrman, C. (1995: 195-206).

hazards of these products. Regina sites the example of an advertisement for beauty creams containing hydroquinone:

The complete skin lightening treatment. The lighter you look, the lovelier you look. It does it. Extra fast. Extra effective. It is for bright, successful people....Extra skin lightening cream with hydroquinone is a specially formulated, greaseless cream to give a lighter, brighter skin and a blemish-free complexion. It is fast acting and used by successful people everywhere.⁴¹

Advertisements like these highlight the conviction that beauty can be exchanged for other valued social and cultural resources such as political status and economic success, regardless of the health hazards involved. The desire to attain success by enhancing one's physical beauty thus extends beyond attracting mates from the opposite sex (Jackson, 1992:42), because it also serves to secure the financial and, in some cases, the political power of previously marginalised women.

In Africa, the far-reaching implication of the growing encouragement to lighten one's skin is evidenced by the fact that Christian women from Mali who do not bleach their skins are regarded as second class citizens. These dark-skinned women are not offered a seat at baptisms, and they are asked not to participate in the taking of group photographs at marriages. Skin bleaching products sold under such names as Marie-Claire and Diana are consequently promoted so that they may become lighter and eventually gain acceptance in their society.⁴² This association of skin lighteners with the potential for upward social mobility is extremely common in contemporary African communities.⁴³

⁴¹ See <http://www.africasia.com.icpubs>.

⁴² See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/718359.stm>.

⁴³ See, for example, available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1114088.stm>.

While the globalisation of mass consumerism has enhanced the penetration of commodities on the global market, including commodities associated with the beauty industry, this does not change the fact that differences between individual cultures or spheres of influence are in some cases playing an ever-greater role in people's perception of their relationship to, and place in, a globalised world (Laver, 1966; Tarlo, 1996; Young, 2000; Hoodfar, 2003; Spurles, 2003; Allman, 2004; Fair, 2004; Akou, 2004; Hay, 2004; Renne, 2004; Hansen, 2004; Boateng, 2004; Ivaska, 2004). Indeed, even though globalisation may seem inevitable, global culture is not as homogenous as it might appear at first sight, in part because intermediate agents interpret, receive and retransmit the flow of cultural capital from one context to another. Grounded in specific material histories and markets, they translate international realities into local ones. Even in trans-national contexts, cultural capital can never become dislocated from local economic and political realities. In other words, this capital is never governed by rules, but follows a logic that is determined by particular social contexts (Kasfir, 1999).⁴⁴

The hybridisation of concepts of beauty resulting from this complex flow of cultural capital is evidenced in the lives of young Samburu men from Kenya who abandon their everyday dress of *shuka*, sandals and beads, as well as their swords and spears, in favour of blue jeans, jackets and sneakers when they travel into and across Nairobi on their way to Mombasa. In Nairobi, where the police harass the Samburu as 'primitive' if they wear their 'traditional' garments, it is imperative for them to hide their identity. But after reaching safer locations both in this city and in Mombasa, the reassertion of a socially distinctive warrior aesthetics plays a crucial role in strategies

⁴⁴ See, also, Davis, K. (1995). Also Kaiser, S. B. (1996).

to attract the attention of tourists. The Samburu 'stand far less chance of marketing their spears' when they are dressed in modern fashions, like blue jeans (Kasfir, 1999: 74-77).

Modern forms of transport have made it increasingly easy not only for commodities but also for people to move from one geographical area to another within the same country, and across the world, in a short time. Addressing this development, Rabine (2000: 18) invokes the idea of the 'global suitcase' into which African migrants pack small consignments of cloth which they take to the United States. On reaching their destination, this material is sold through informal networks of family and friends who, in turn, move easily by car from one area to another. When they return home, African tailors and designers take ideas and fashions from the United States back to their own communities, where they incorporate them into their national styles. Despite often very significant changes in style and meaning, some aspects of the social, cultural and economic institutions associated with pre-colonial notions of women's beauty nevertheless survive this movement back and forth across the world (Boateng, 2004: 212-226).

With the globalisation and increasing commercialisation of products associated with female beauty, the concept of beauty has nevertheless become increasingly detached from the moral base it formerly had in most communities. As Van Esterik (1996: 216) points out: 'Beauty is seen less as a natural attribute existing within the body and radiating outward, and more as something that can be purchased, placed on the surface and enhanced'.

The commoditisation of beauty through commercially driven beauty pageants underlines this global shift away from the idea that beauty might be regarded as a moral attribute. As Moskalenko (1996: 67) points out, however, until very recently:

To participate in a beauty contest to a large extent meant to go against the still-prevailing public opinion that only indecent and disgraceful girls took part; girls who do not mind being seen by millions of TV viewers in swimming costumes marching on the stage; girls whose moral values were below public standards, girls who were more associated with prostitutes than beauty queens.

Even today, it is not uncommon for people to assert that it is immoral to throw huge sums of money at something as useless as beauty pageants while millions of people live below the poverty line with no medical care, very little educational support, poor transport, hunger and many other problems. The sponsors of these competitions, it is claimed, should rather use the money for development projects.⁴⁵ In keeping with these sentiments, there is still a widespread conviction that beauty queens are problematic because they are judged not on who they are and what they have accomplished in their communities, but on entirely superficial criteria focusing on physical appearances (Moskalenko, 1996: 67; Johnson, 1993).

Latham (1995: 149-168) links this commodification of beauty to the increasing leisure afforded through the Industrial Revolution. As people began to work for shorter periods, industries associated with leisure sprang up. It is against this background that the emergence of the modern beauty pageant evolved into the massive industry it has become today.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ This criticism may explain why the Miss World Pageant supports charities.

⁴⁶ See, also, Wilson, E. (2003; 14).

Especially since the rise of Feminist critiques in the 1970s, these beauty contests have been criticised as counter to women's perceptions of freedom (Bordo, 1993; Wolf, 1991: 80).⁴⁷ For example, it has been argued that they seek to undo, psychologically and covertly, all the good things Feminism did for women materially and overtly (Bordo, 1993; Wolf, 1991: 267-269, 288; Latham, 1995: 166). In keeping with this conviction that pageants promote the alluring display of women's bodies in a vulgar and degrading way, it is often argued that beauty contests do not promote women's beauty, but act instead as conduits for multinational cosmetics companies to promote and sell their products.⁴⁸

Protests against these contests have in some cases also been motivated by religious consideration. In 2002, for example, the Muslim community from northwest Lagos burnt Christian churches, killing people and looting shops in a riot which erupted after a newspaper suggested that the Prophet Mohammed would have chosen a wife from among the contestants of a local beauty pageant. Although extreme, this response highlights the fact that in Islamic communities a woman's body may not be exploited. Only a husband may uncover the body of his wife, and women who have not married are required to behave decorously (El Guindi, 1999: 137).⁴⁹

These views regarding female modesty are not necessarily confined to religious communities, however, for they are also implicit in the values of some traditionalist groups where the tendency to guard female morality serves to protect the economic rights of men over the reproductive potential of women. As Eicher and Sumberg

⁴⁷ See, also, Wilson, E. (2003: 13); Capenter, D. and Wifree, W. (1996).

⁴⁸ See <http://www.cnn.com/2000/ASIANOW/south/12/15/life.india.beauty.reut>.

⁴⁹ See, also, <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/africa/11/22/nigeria.missworld/index.html>.

(1995: 304) note: ‘...world fashion...may invite tension among people if associated with secular values and unseemly behaviour’.

The negative perceptions of beauty contests notwithstanding, according to some commentators these pageants afford the participants opportunities to enhance their communication and presentation skills. Cohen et al (1996: 1-3) have also suggested that they tie segments of the world’s population together so that they become part of a global community. Richard Wilk (1996: 231) suggests likewise that these contests support the concept of democracy, build the nation, and increase the status of women.⁵⁰ The views of writers like Nancy Friday (1996: 39) are also useful to the organisers of these competitions since, according to her, the contests have helped women who were economically marginalized to gain economic power.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, views like these are often supported by the contestants themselves. Thus, for example, according to Priyanka Chopra, the winner of Miss World 2000: ‘Once (this competition) was condemned as a cattle market, but now it is hailed as a bit of fun’.⁵² She got \$100,000 for winning the competition.

It is probably this desire for economic and social mobility that has made it especially difficult for the Tanzanian government to ban beauty contests in recent years. But here and elsewhere in Africa, debates continue to rage regarding the status of global competitions of this kind and the survival within them, or despite them, of local values and concepts of beauty. Thus, for example, the former Miss South Africa, Peggy Khumalo, suggested that: ‘It is high time now that Africans should respect their

⁵⁰ See, also, Cohen, C. B. (1996: 125-145); Johnson, M. (1996: 90).

⁵¹ See, also, Stoeltje, B. (1996: 14-21); Lavenda, R. H. (1996: 43-45)

⁵² See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1076611.stm. See, also, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1048097.stm>.

natural beauty rather than imitating European criteria'.⁵³ Likewise, it has been argued that European notions of beauty and African notions of beauty basically differ given the respective contexts from which they arise.⁵⁴



Fig: 1: In 1994, Nelson Mandela and Julia Morley, the coordinator of Miss World. In recent years important personalities have been used to encourage a greater acceptance of these contests and their supposed role in promoting the interests of women.⁵⁵

While debates like these will most probably continue into the future, the globalisation of the beauty industry, and the role beauty pageants play in promoting products associated with this industry, has far-reaching implications for an understanding of contemporary concepts of beauty, not only in Europe and the USA, but also in Africa and therefore in countries like Tanzania.

⁵³ *Dimba* (August 31 to September 6, 1997).

⁵⁴ *Nipashe* (September 20, 1997). See, also, McAllister, C. (1996: 105-124).

⁵⁵ See, also, Moran, M. H. (1996: 153-154).

CHAPTER TWO

A SHORT HISTORY OF TANZANIA

Fig: 2: A Map of Tanzania



Source: CIA-The World Fact Book-Tanzania.¹

Chapter One provides a general introduction and background to this study on women's beauty. It outlines key theoretical issues and provides a literature review on aspects of the history of women's beauty relevant to a consideration of the Tanzanian context. Chapter Two outlines the historical context for the study.

¹ See <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/tz.html>.

The interior of modern-day Tanzania, which became an independent state through the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964 (Kaniki, 1980: 346),² is believed to have been inhabited originally by people of click-tongue ethnic groups, who were related to southern Africa's San communities.³ These early inhabitants were displaced by agriculturalist Bantu groups from the west and south, and pastoralist Nilotes from the north. In coastal areas (Mbwiliza, 1991: 2)⁴ Arab, Persian and Chinese traders played an important role as early as the 8th century. They were joined in about the 12th century by Indian traders. By the 15th century, the main trading centres had developed into well established coastal city states, for example, Dar es Salaam, Bagamoyo and Zanzibar. Following Vasco da Gama's exploration of this coastal area in 1498, the Portuguese gained control over the entire coastline in 1506.⁵ But they were quickly forced southwards by the indigenous coastal people in collaboration with the Oman Arabs. The latter claimed the coastal strip in 1804, and the Oman Sultan Seyyid Said moved his capital to Zanzibar in 1841 (Arnold, 1980: 52).⁶ Today, Tanzania comprises more than 120 ethnic groups, occupies 945, 087 square kilometres, and borders Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia (Temu, 1980: 88).

While this early history is still relevant to a consideration of some aspects of beauty in the recent history of Tanzania, the colonial and post-colonial periods are particularly important to this study. The focus of this chapter is therefore primarily on early mission activities, the impact on indigenous cultures of successive colonial

² See, also, <http://www.nationbynation.com/Tanzania/History1.html>. Also Taasisi (1984).

³ See http://www.globalvolunteers.org/1main/tanzania/tanzania_info.htm.

⁴ See, also, http://www.simbaeastaficansafari.com/tanzania_general_info.htm. See, also, <http://www.great-adventures.com/destinations/tanzania/maasai.html>.

⁵ See <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0861437.html>.

⁶ See, also, Sheriff, A. (1987a); Sheriff, A. (1987b); William, G. (1989).

governments, and various laws and regulations dating to the post-independence period.

By 1885 five Christian missionary societies were working in Tanzania (Iliffe, 1979: 84, Rodney, 1980: 128). They included the Holy Ghost Fathers, the Anglicans of the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), the Anglicans of the Church Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society, and the White Fathers. Until the late 1870s, the Holy Ghost Fathers and the UMCA concentrated their missionary activities on settlements of freed slaves.⁷ At Bagamoyo, for example, freed slaves worked approximately twelve hours a day, five days a week, for the mission in return for food, clothing, and a plot of land to cultivate in their spare time. Church attendance was compulsory, and no resident was allowed to leave the village without the priest's permission. These closed settlements afforded protection from re-enslavement and provided a milieu in which additional evangelist clergymen could be trained with a view to converting established communities further inland.

At Bagamoyo all instruction was in French, and Latin was studied in preparation for the priesthood. By 1895 the Holy Ghost Fathers located at this mission station had sent several pupils for further training in Europe, while the UMCA had sent fifteen young men and women to Britain. As a teacher from one of the UMCA school noted, this intensive European education encouraged converts to adopt the missionaries' culture: 'If one asks them what they called such and such a thing in their own native dialect...they will turn away...they seem to want to forget utterly everything

⁷ See <http://www.rc.net/tanzania/tec/tzchurch.htm>.

connected to their past life...Another peculiarity...is their amazing fondness for everything English...' (Iliffe, 1979: 85).

In areas like Chaggaland in northern Tanzania where communities were actively involved in regional commercial activities, missionaries were welcomed chiefly as experts with valuable skills. Thus, for example, Chief Rindi told the Chaggaland missionaries that: 'I want you very much to return to Moche (Moshi), particularly if you can bring some artisans with you. I shall be glad to have my young people taught to read and write...I want paints and dyes of all colours; I want tools - saws, planes, a brace and bits, a screw-making machine...' (Iliffe, 1979: 86).

The German missionaries in Chaggaland were the first to establish schools and, by 1904, the number of children attending primary schools in that area had increased to 101,035, 'perhaps a quarter of all children of school age' (Iliffe, 1979: 224). The impact this education had on the Chagga was tremendous⁸ so much so that, by 1912, 'chiefs were beginning to resent the fact that from among the previously poor people a more elevated stratum is working its way up, which...through...greater job opportunity, and intelligence is able to achieve a position which puts it alongside the stratum of chiefs and rich men' (Iliffe, 1979: 232).

The establishment of colonial rule in Tanzania (Mbilinyi, 1980: 239-240) involved the institutionalization of the state by the two powers that colonized Tanzania, Germany (1890-1918) and Britain (1919-1960). The Germans preferred direct administration,

⁸ Towards the end of the colonial era, the majority of Africans still didn't have access to formal education. In 1958, 24.1 percent of the children aged between 5-14 were in school, while in 1960, 16.5 percent of those aged between 18-29 were enrolled in formal educational institutions (Omari, et al., 1982: 25, 27 quoted by Roy-Campbell, 1991: 2002).

while the British used indirect rule. German penetration of the interior was spearheaded by Karl Peters, who formed the Society for German Colonisation, and signed a number of treaties with local chiefs.⁹ In so far as the limited military resources permitted, punitive expeditions were sent against recalcitrant chiefs. In 1891, following an agreement with Britain delineating different spheres of interest in the region, the German Government established direct administration over Tanganyika. By 1903 they had divided this new Colony into twelve civil and sixteen military districts, with headquarters at Dar es Salaam. But this colonial government's power was limited, mainly because it lacked staff and money.

Following the defeat of Germany in the First World War, East Africa was handed over to Britain (Mbilinyi, 1980: 240), which took over the administration of the Tanganyika Territory formally established by the Tanganyika Order in 1920. It was in 1925¹⁰ that the British introduced a system of indirect rule, which involved the administration of communities by their own chiefs and elders under British supervision (Hirji, 1980: 200). This was done in the hope that it would encourage political and economic development without leading to 'detribalisation'. To ensure the uniform application of this system of administration it was also proposed that Tanganyika's then twenty-two districts should be grouped into provinces under senior officials, and that the office of Secretary for Native Affairs should be created.

The impact colonial rule (Hirji, 1980: 201) had on Tanzania was not only political and economic, but also social and cultural. Politically (Rodney, 1980: 131), this impact included the introduction of a new judicial system and a new bureaucratic type of

⁹ See <http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/world/A0861437.html>.

¹⁰ See <http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/world/A0861437.html>.

administration. British rule also influenced the emergence and rise of nationalism, for it was partly through resistance to colonial rule that a new consciousness or sense of unity gradually emerged. Economically (Iliffe, 1980: 288), this rule led in many cases to the destruction of the internal dynamics of traditional African economies through the introduction of a money economy and banking systems; the introduction of new forms of taxation that forced people to work for wages unless they were prepared to sell their livestock; and the introduction of European commodities, for example, clothes, alcohol, shoes, and cigarettes. This went hand in hand with the introduction of light industries for the production of consumer goods, and active discouragement of the production of locally manufactured goods. Socially, of course, colonialism, and the presence in Tanzania of Arab and other trader communities, led to the spread of Christianity and Islam, and the introduction of new forms of education.

The development of towns (Iliffe, 1980: 288) was particularly marked from the early 20th century onwards, while new social classes emerged in these urban centres soon thereafter. The migration of people from different parts to Arusha, Kilimanjaro, Tanga, Dar es Salaam, which followed the creation of new jobs (Rodney, 1980: 131), was especially evident after the British came to power. Under German rule, workers had been imported from outside the colony, such as China and Indonesia, but this policy had failed dismally. Increasingly, therefore, workers were sought from within the colony, especially among the Nyamwezi and Sukuma (Iliffe, 1967: 302).

Initially, these workers were needed, not so much in urban contexts, but for agricultural production because, under British rule, industrialisation was encouraged primarily in Kenya. During 1927 and 1928 this supply of labour in rural areas

improved partly because of medical care. But greater commercialisation of agriculture only took place in the course of the 1950s when official policies shifted from a focus on peasant production to encouraging production by wealthier African farmers. An integral part of this approach was to replace the customary land tenure system with an individual freehold system (Iliffe, 1971: 37) in an attempt to improve plantation agriculture, especially the production of sisal in the eastern part of the country. By 1950 this crop contributed more than 50 percent of the total value of exports from Tanganyika (Bowles, 1973). By the late 1950s, therefore, the industrial sector still contributed only between 3 and 4 percent of the gross domestic product (Coulson, 1982: 79).

Despite the racial stratification of Tanzanian society throughout this period, co-operative unions began to emerge fairly rapidly in the course of the 1950s. In 1952 there were about 188 of these co-operative societies with 153,000 members (Iliffe, 1967: 302). By 1959 there were 617 such societies marketing cotton, coffee, paddy, cashew nuts, and oil seeds (Coulson, 1982: 116). This co-operative movement, which aimed at greater control of trade and the marketing of African-produced crops, had to contend not only with the colonial government, but also with private Asian traders. Together with clubs for African civil servants and teachers they became the social base for nationalist movements (Kiondo, 1989: 11) that promoted the attainment of majority African rule, including Africanisation of all government institutions (Havnevik, 1993: 34).

Resistance (Kaniki, 1980: 347) against colonialism became increasingly widespread in the course of the 20th century. But this resistance first occurred along the coastal areas,

and later among the Hehe under Chief Mkwawa, who decided to cut the trade route from Bagamoyo to Tabora in the late 19th century. By the mid-20th century, when widespread resistance to British rule had also spread to urban areas, key figures like Julius Kambarage Nyerere began to play an increasingly important role in the growing drive for independence.

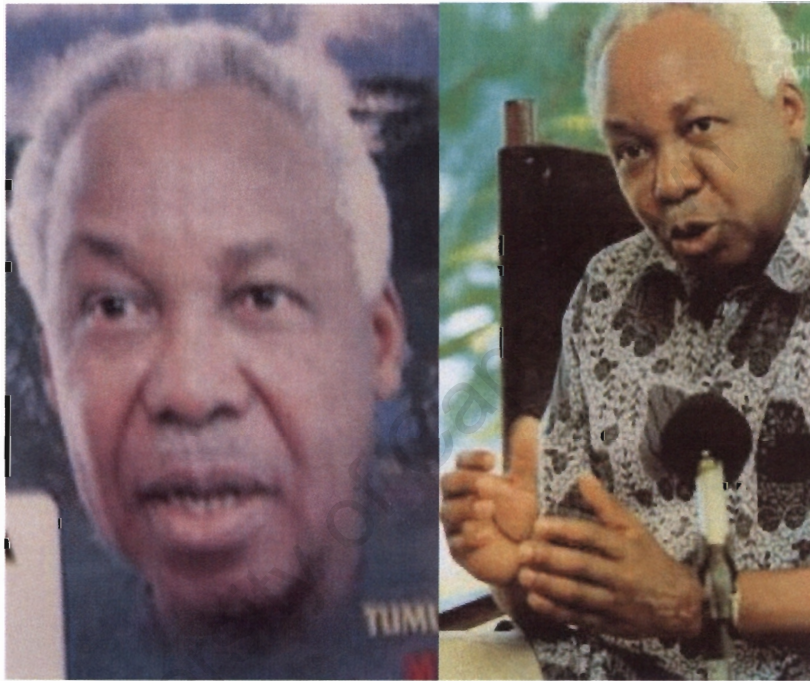


Fig: 3: Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, first president of Tanzania (1961-1985).

Nyerere was born on April 13, 1922 (Kaniki, 1980: 348), son of British colonial government chief. A member of the Zanaki, an agro-pastoralist group from the Mara region along the eastern shores of Lake Victoria, he attended a Roman Catholic primary school before going to the Tabora Government Secondary School. He later went on to train as a teacher at Makerere University in Uganda, and, after qualifying in 1946, he taught at Tabora for three years. He was the African Association's first president at Makerere, and remained an active member of this association while

teaching at Tabora. In 1949, he went to the University of Edinburgh¹¹ on a government scholarship, where he studied for an M.A. in history and political economy. He was the first Tanzanian to study at a British university and the second Tanzanian to gain a university degree outside Africa (Kaniki, 1980: 304, Iliffe, 1979).

While in Britain, Nyerere became attracted to Fabian socialism, which influenced his vision for the future of Tanzania. Always racially sensitive, he hated foreign rule, feared conservative complicity with settlers' ambitions, and was convinced that Africa was moving inexorably towards conflict and liberation, but always feared being rushed into commitment and action (Iliffe, 1979: 509). By 1953, however, it had become clear to him that the politics of independence was crucial to ensuring the future of indigenous African communities (Nyerere, 1968: 23-29; Smith, 1973; Legum and Mmari, 1995).

Elected President for the Tanganyika African Association (TAA), which became the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in 1954, Nyerere and other key figures associated with TANU tried to accommodate the interests of people from all walks of life, including peasants, workers, and business persons (Iliffe, 1967: 308). At this stage the involvement of women, who were mostly unemployed, became crucial in waging the struggle for independence through TANU. Nyerere's own role in this struggle was decisive, partly because he had the ability to react creatively to particular situations (Pratt, 1976: 202).

¹¹ See http://www.nationaudio.com/News/DailyNation/171099/Comment/News_Analysis8.html.

Under the leadership of Makerere-trained intellectuals, TANU was modelled on Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (Cliffe, 1996: 251), a decision which assured it the support of organized groups such as cooperative movements, the Youth League of the Party (1956), the Women section of the Party - which in 1962 became the Umoja wa Wanawake Tanzania (UWT) - and the Tanganyika Federation of Labour (TFL). The crucial event in TANU's independence campaign was its victory in the 1958-9 election.¹² After long deliberations, the British colonial administration and TANU agreed that five TANU representatives should become ministers in June 1959. Following a further electoral triumph, independent government was achieved in September 1960, leading to the birth of modern-day Tanzania in December 1961 (Kaniki, 1980).

Political independence did not, however, alter the economic dependency relationship created under colonial rule. The inherited economy was largely dependent on exporting cash crops and allowing unrestricted foreign investment (Rugumamu, 1997). Nationalist leaders had to confront this reality in their efforts to build a sense of nationalism in a politically, socially and economically competitive international environment. Iliffe (1979) identifies four factors that were crucial to this process: the transfer of power, the security of the nation, forging new institutions and ideologies, and development strategies.

One of the problems that emerged after independence was the issue of social differentiation among Africans. Africanisation led to the development of new elites that used the wealth they had accrued from leadership positions to support a

¹²See <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0861437.html>. See, also, http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/section/Tanzania_history.asp.

conspicuous style of living. They also acquired property, and shares and directorships in private companies. This new bureaucratic class threatened nation building, leading to the Arusha Declaration of 1967, which among other things sought to address various problems that had become more marked after independence.

The Arusha Declaration was adopted in Arusha by the National Executive Council (NEC) of the then ruling party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU).¹³ This Declaration set out economic and social priorities aimed at building a socialist society. It also served as a critique of the post-colonial situation in the first five years after independence. As such, the Declaration tried to check capitalist development in Tanzania, arguing instead for self-reliance strategies. In particular, it tried to mobilise domestic resources, land and people in an effort to minimise excessive dependence on foreign aid, and it aimed, further, to maintain Tanzanian independence and freedom from international capital (Nyerere, 1968: 248). By socialism, the Declaration meant public ownership of the means of production, distribution and consumption. This required a greater interventionist role on the part of the state. It also meant that mutual co-operation would be prioritised to ensure economic survival. Communal villages were considered an important aspect of this strategy.

In Tanzania, villagisation (Nyerere, 1967)¹⁴ involved the resettlement of rural populations into new villages. This resettlement programme was aimed at enabling Tanzanians to take control of their economy in an egalitarian setting. The strategy also sought to instil a spirit of socio-economic collectivism and national unity by challenging ethnic alignments. According to Nyerere: 'A country beset with so much

¹³ See http://www.nationaudio.com/News/Daily/DailyNation/171099/Comment/News_Analysis9.html.

¹⁴ See, also, <http://www.groups.msn.com/PakaChume/tanzania.msnw>.

poverty, illiteracy and disease had to come together, start together, in order to pull together'.¹⁵ This programme was in some cases implemented without the consultation and consent of the resettled population, and without regard to the customary land tenure systems which governed people's socio-cultural practices and the meanings they attached to the land.¹⁶

By 1970, however, it had become clear, firstly that the pace at which these villages were being established was so slow that it would take a very long time to complete the process, and secondly, that the supply of basic social services to rural populations of "the rural population" in their scattered settlements was comparatively expensive.¹⁷ Unlike the earlier Ujamaa¹⁸ villagisation programme in which people were encouraged to move and to work together, the 1970s programme thus forced people to live together in permanent settlements, with the freedom to work or not work communally.¹⁹

In 1971, people from the Dodoma region who were engaged partly in a pastoral ways of life, took the lead in mobilising its entire population into villages. Nyerere personally and physically participated in this resettlement exercise,²⁰ which became known as 'Operation Dodoma' because of the speed and vigour with which it was undertaken. 'Operation Dodoma' was followed by 'Operation Kigoma', which was

¹⁵ See <http://www.unesco.org/culture/creativity/education/images/hatar.doc>.

¹⁶ See <http://www.unrisd.org>.

¹⁷ See <http://www.safariafrika.com/country-facts/tanzania/human-resources2.htm>. See, also, <http://www.whoseland.com/paper7.html>.

¹⁸ Ujamaa (family hood or community in Kiswahili) was Nyerere's philosophy of life, based on the concept of equality, joint action, and unified responses. See <http://www.education.pwv.gov.za/index.asp?>.

¹⁹ While the Ujamaa programme emphasized communal living, this new villagisation programme advocated permanent settlements and proximate habitation.

²⁰ Interview with Mama Kadudu, Mama Soka, Rev. Fr. Kitomari, and Moses Jamakwea, Arusha, 18/8/2000, 31/3/2001.

equally comprehensive. Following the apparently successful completion of these two operations in terms of the number of settlements, the government ruled in 1974 that living together in villages would no longer be optional for other regions. The end of 1976 was therefore fixed as the time by which all people in rural areas were to be moved into these resettlement villages, but active resistance among some communities,²¹ like the Maasai, ultimately forced the government to rethink this policy.

The Arusha Declaration, which had initially given rise to this process of resettlement, underscored the importance of making key policy decisions consistent with the ideas of socialism and self reliance (Rugumamu, 1997: 123). The Declaration emphasised the need to promote and celebrate hard work and agricultural development, rather than industrial and urban development (Havnevik, 1993: 42). It enjoyed widespread support because it emphasised equality among all Tanzanians, and its policies addressed not only economic and political issues, but certain religions and cultural ones as well (Frostin, 1988:1).²²

The philosophy of the Arusha Declaration was translated into the Three Year Development Plan (1961-1964), the First Five Year Development Plan (1964-1969), and the Second Five Year Development Plan (1969-1974). These plans were all designed by the World Bank (WB, 1961: VII).²³ It was during this period that people

²¹ See <http://www.galenfrysinger.com/tanzania.htm>.

²² Other, related policy documents included the Socialism and Rural Development Policy also issued in 1968; the Education for Self Reliance Document issued in March 1967; TANU guidelines issued in February 1971; and the Decentralisation Policy of May 1972.

²³ The Three Year Development Plan and others that followed were largely enforced by policy inputs from foreign advisors and consultancy reports. These reports advised on the general economic development with special emphasis on agriculture and foreign investment. They also recommended

were moved into nuclear villages, which went in hand with the expansion of social services such as health, water, transport and education, and the promotion of communal farming methods.²⁴ Between 1973 and 1975, the number of people in nucleated villages increased from 2,028,164 to 9,140,229. This villagisation process continued so that by 1980 there were 14,179,299 people or 91.4 percent of the rural population in 8269 villages (Maliyamkono, et al, 1986: 42).

Villagisation was sometimes accompanied by by-laws aimed at regulating agricultural practices and other aspects of rural life, for example, traditional land use systems. This intervention in rural tenure practices went hand-in-and with new educational directives such as the Musoma Resolution of 1974, which allowed female students to join university directly after finishing their secondary school education, rather than do two years of National Service, which they had all been required to do after Independence (Biswalo, 1980).

In 1967, the East African Community²⁵ was officially formed with a view to promoting economic self-reliance and political stability in the region. This Community decentralised and relocated its headquarters from Nairobi to Arusha to ensure an equitable distribution of power and control among the member countries. But the East African Community remained dependent on European trading relationships, which still took precedence over regional trade. Because the EAC was also characterised by contradictory political interests, variations in ideological orientation, and unequal

that the country should embark on import substitution, industrialisation and processing of raw materials. See, also, URT. (1969).

²⁴ See Government of Tanzania (1975) 'The Villages and Ujamaa Villages Act 1975'. See, also, Nyerere (1966); Nyerere (1968); Nyerere (1973); Nyerere (1974) and Nyerere (1977).

²⁵ See <http://www.eac.int/LVDP/eac.htm>.

economic distribution among the member countries, it ultimately failed to sustain itself, collapsing in 1977, ten years after it was first formed.

In Tanzania itself, efforts to ensure sustainable development continued to flourish, however. In 1973, economists from the Harvard Institute of International Development were invited to make recommendation for a long-term industrial and economic strategy (1975 - 95), which among other things led to a substantial increase of foreign aid to the industrial sector (Collier, 1987).²⁶ In the beginning, the Tanzanian government was reluctant to accept suggestions like these on the ground that they were not compatible with the philosophy of the Arusha Declaration, which favoured collective rather than individual entrepreneurship. But the need to secure external assistance from international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank forced it to accept interventions of this kind. After President Nyerere, who was the chief architect of the Arusha Declaration, retired from the presidency in 1985, his successor President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, had no choice but to comply with the conditionalities of the IMF. In 1986, he signed the IMF Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which emphasised the need to achieve greater social, economic and political liberalisation and privatisation (Campbell and Stein, 1991).

It is against this background that the 20th century history of beauty outlined in this thesis unfolded. As will become clear in Chapters Three to Six, changing trends and values regarding notions of female beauty, which became increasingly complex and diverse towards the end of this century, were not only informed by some of the socio-

²⁶ Foreign aid increased from 8 percent annually in the period 1974-76, to 29 percent in 1977-80.

cultural and political processes outlined above, but in some cases flowed directly from them.

My own memory about the role beauty played in the lives of Tanzanian women goes back to the period when I was five years old in the early 1960s. At that stage of my life I was living with my maternal grandmother in Ngumbo village along the eastern shores of Lake Nyasa. In Ngumbo, I was encouraged to develop certain attitudes to my own body. For example, I was told not to spread my legs while sitting, not to expose my body in public, particularly in front of men; to get up early in the morning, and wash my face before embarking on any activities; to assist in the kitchen and with farm work; and always to greet and respect elderly people wherever I went.²⁷ Basically, I was moulded to look and behave like a woman of the Mpoto ethnic group,²⁸ proudly known as the 'Daughters of the Lake'; *Vana va Kulochi*²⁹ in the Mpoto language.

When I subsequently moved to Mbugwe to join my parents, the practice of collective bathing I had come to know in Ngumbo, where women of different ages met on the shores of Lake Nyasa, was completely unknown. At Mbugwe, bathing of this kind was discouraged for fear of encountering wild animals and dangerous reptiles such as snakes along the local river banks. Bordering on the Manyara and Tarangire National Parks, this area was always vulnerable to attacks by roaming predators. I therefore had

²⁷ According to Freedman (1986: 37) 'Girls are socialized to seek the approval of parents and peers from earliest childhood'.

²⁸ See, also, Friday (1996: 122-124).

²⁹ This was to differentiate the Mpoto from their neighbouring ethnic groups, who were located far from the lake, and who were considered by the Mpoto not to be as clean as themselves. See, also, Boone (1986: 117).

to adapt to the practice of indoor bathing, which denied me the opportunity to develop my understanding of beauty in the intimate company of other women.

A number of the attributes of beauty I encountered in my new home were also relatively new to me. These include ‘umbrella’ style long dresses, different *khangas*³⁰ designs, *brassiers* and high heeled shoes. In addition to this, I saw for the first time that there were women with silver earrings, bangles, necklaces, and wristwatches. Hot-combing, hair-straightening and plaiting styles were common, as was the use of lipstick, body perfumes, body lotions and creams. Food styles and eating patterns, music and dancing styles, even the use of language, encouraged me to embrace an entirely different social and cultural world to the one I had come to know in my grandmother’s home.

When I started my schooling at a day school run by the Roman Catholic Mission³¹ situated twelve kilometres from my home village, my earlier conceptions of beauty were again transformed by a myriad of experiences, in which the school itself played a dominant role. Here, I was encouraged to accept the attractiveness of uniformity, hierarchical power relations, and responsiveness to authority. The values inculcated by my teachers were structured and institutionalized. They monitored and restricted the physical, moral and psychological boundaries between the boys and girls, encouraged cleanliness through proper bathing, brushing one’s teeth, cutting one’s nails and caring for one’s hair. They also encouraged the development of good

³⁰ *Khanga* is a rectangle of pure cotton cloth with borders all around it and printed in bold designs, and bright colours. See, also, http://swahilicoast.com/kanga_-_a_medium_of_communication.htm.

³¹ See Burke (1996: 35-62) who notes that African students attending schools run by Christian missionaries were encouraged to think of themselves as the favoured clean among the great unwashed of the uneducated and unconverted. As this suggests, there is an explicit link between cleanliness and godliness. See, also, Chapkis (1986: 61).

manners, hard work and perseverance. Because they themselves were not part of the local community from which the students came, these values differed in subtle but often very significant ways from those I had been exposed to before, orienting me to accept and naturalise alien notions of beauty that were nevertheless reinforced by my parents who often told me: 'That is not what you are taught in school'.³² My life at home thus began to echo the ideals and values I was encountering outside.



Fig: 4: Young primary school girls wearing Tanzania's current national public school uniform. Photograph: Sixmund Begashe (2003)

At the other end of the spectrum were the Mbugwe, the indigenous community living in this region. They were extremely resistant to change. Children from this group had permanent long and short tattoos on their cheeks and upper faces,³³ and beads around their waist. It was common for Mbugwe pupils to wear their school uniforms under

³² See, also, Chapkis (1986) on the role of modern schools as agents for cultural assimilation.

³³ See examples of facial and body decorations from different parts of Africa, in Bewaji (2003: 103-105).

their traditional attire on their way to and from school.³⁴ These blanket-like garments were removed as they stepped into the school grounds.³⁵ They also applied cow ghee to their bodies, the smell of which non-Mbugwe found repulsive. The effort of the teachers to suppress these Mbugwe practices and concepts of beauty played a significant role in my own early experiences of beauty. Neither the parents, nor the children, understood the hostility they encountered. But because the school operated under the state's laws and guidelines, which encouraged modernisation and greater uniformity among all communities,³⁶ their capacity to resist change was very limited.

In 1970, I went to Korogwe Secondary School situated in the Tanga region. It was a girls' boarding school run by the government in collaboration with Anglican missionaries. Again, my experiences of women's beauty faced new challenges. The school uniform,³⁷ which came from England, was brighter than my previous one. There were no restrictions regarding hairstyles: girls could either plait their hair in different ways or comb it freely. But black leather shoes were obligatory, and, out of school, clothing styles reflected attitudes of competition, social and financial power, and an overwhelming desire to seem fashionably modern. Here, students coming from poorer or rural families tried to compensate for the fact that they were made to feel inferior by buying expensive dresses,³⁸ up-to-date shoes, and body decorations that they could not really afford. Among the richer students, it was common to use

³⁴ According to Maynard (2002: 190-191) 'Clothing is a complex...bodily covering, which may be read in many ways. Its multiple and various meanings differ widely between the wearer's intentions and other people's perceptions about what is worn. It is thus an aspect of material culture that has a serious public implications'.

³⁵ Hendrickson (1996: 51) terms a similar case as 'an intermediate phase' when referring to the Tswana school children who wore school uniforms during school hours, then replaced these uniforms with skins, which they wore for the rest of the day. See, also, Sumberg, B. (1995: 165-181).

³⁶ Burke (1996: 53) The government of Zimbabwe sponsored lectures, and published pamphlets, leaflets, and posters to promote collective and personal cleanliness, for a programme entitled 'The Road to Civilisation'. See, also, Cohn, S. (1989: 303-353).

³⁷ See, also, Donald (2002: 206-208)

³⁸ See, also, ideas concerning 'Dressing for Success', in Friday (1996: 353-356).

expensive perfumes, cosmetics, bath soaps and deodorants. Less anxious about projecting an image of wealth, they focused not so much on outward appearances as on personal hygiene.

As this short, personal account demonstrates, concepts of beauty are commonly informed by a host of factors. Especially in situations where values and perceptions clash, individuals and entire communities are forced to re-evaluate their own concepts of beauty, in some cases leading them to re-examine established practices, in others encouraging them to resist change.³⁹ In many situations, moreover, encounters with new or foreign notions of beauty can have unanticipated consequences, like the emergence of values that suggest a degree of anxiety in the face of a sudden displacement or lack of institutional support for older values.

In Tanzania, during the pre-colonial period, displays of women's beauty were endorsed and controlled by the community. Indigenous African attributes of beauty⁴⁰ took account both of a woman's body, validating notions such as strength, physical fitness, size, shape, height and her reproductive potential, and ideas such as hard work, obedience, respect, good conduct and the ability to dance properly. These ideals of beauty were shaped, reshaped and maintained throughout a woman's life span (Mihanjo, 1997:71-78).

³⁹ See Burke (1996: 171-202). In Zimbabwe, women used modern beauty products to reinvent the traditional practice of smearing their bodies with red or yellow soil, mixing it with oil as part of hygiene and for protecting their bodies against the sun and the wind.

⁴⁰ See Burke (1996: 24): 'African peoples prior to colonialism had their own clearly defined hygienic rules and codes as well as ideas about what constituted proper physical appearance and personal manners'.

In these communities, external markets did not influence concepts of beauty or beauty contests. Instead, women's beauty formed part and parcel of other established social and cultural processes. Certain practices were therefore obligatory and permanent, rather than optional, and beauty contests were integrated into the rituals and ceremonies held to mark different seasons, most often the harvesting season. On these occasions, women decorated their bodies with natural products such as ash, clay, vegetable and animal fats. They also wore ornaments such as beads, earrings, and bangles. These annual contests served to reinforce the community's cultural identity by encouraging women to honour their daily responsibilities of mothering, farming, conserving the environment, and respecting the religious values of their group. In other words, beauty was an active concept based on the idea of doing things (Mihanjo, 1997; Boone, 1986).⁴¹



Fig: 5: A young girl plaiting her companion's hair. In this way young children are oriented towards accepting the perceptions of beauty of their society. Photograph: Rehema Nchimbi (2000)

⁴¹ According to Boone (1986: 81-82): The entire Mende community was worried about how a girl would 'turn out: will she do right and bring riches, honour, and even fame; or will she do wrong and cause chagrin and disgrace. Because the girl was expected to bring only goodness to her community, she thus underwent intense advising, teaching, cajoling, encouraging and punishing'.

With the advent of colonialism, the dominantly communal dimension of both pre-colonial concepts of beauty and “beauty contests” gave way to the promotion of individual concerns and a rejection of indigenous values and practices that had repeatedly been ridiculed by outsiders. This is evidenced in accounts like that of Thomson, who reported in 1881 (261-262) that the women of East Africa:

were ... prominent in their peculiarities. They had remarkably small heads, very long swan-like necks, with a most abnormal development, tapering like a cone up to the neck. Their legs were long and thin, and the length of the mammae was something altogether exceptional even in Africa. The left breast was generally longer than the right, owing to the habit of carrying their children on that side. One woman...had her left breast about fifteen inches long, and she could with the utmost ease suckle her child over her shoulder. Altogether the women looked such unattractive specimens as are rarely to be seen.⁴²

Confronted by distorted perceptions like these, the notion that colonial (white) values were superior became increasingly common, even among African communities. Whiteness came to be associated with ideas such as modesty, cleanliness, perfection and civilisation, and non-indigenous forms of dress came to signify notions of sophistication and an increasingly cosmopolitan sense of identity. European things and languages were accorded a growing status as attributes of a more attractive and therefore more desirable world.

The impact of ‘white’ ideals on female concepts of beauty among migrants in Lake Nyasa area is a good example. Mihanjo (1997: 75) notes that phrases such as *sanga white*, meaning, literally, ‘choose a white partner’, gained momentum during Matengo traditional dances on the return of men who had left the area in search of work among

⁴² Similarly, Burke (1996: 19-20) refers to accounts written by European travellers to south-central Africa, in 1890s, who characterised Africans as ‘ugly...repulsive degradations of humanity...lived more or less like wild animals...state of filth...have no idea of cleanliness...rarely bathe themselves...never wash their clothes’. See, also, Allman, J. (2004: 146); Hay, M. J. (2004: 68-69).

white settler communities throughout southern Africa. These Matengo men worked both on mines and on settlers' farms, mainly in Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

After gaining independence in 1961, Tanzania's government tried to redefine notions of beauty with a view to addressing the fact that the country was a newly-independent nation seeking to develop a strong sense of self. This is why fashions such as mini-skirts, bell-bottom and wigs were banned (Ivaska, 2004: 104-121).⁴³ Soon, attempts were also made to ban beauty contests, particularly the Miss Tanzania contest, which was first held in the country in 1968.⁴⁴ The then Commissioner of the Ministry of Education and Culture maintained that, 'culture to Tanzania is not only the main National emblem, but also a source of livelihood for its citizens. Concepts of glamour and fashion from the West have completely distorted the indigenous culture' (ACC 540/CD/CR/46:LGRD/B.1/1/6, 11).⁴⁵ As late as 1997, Mama Sitti Mwinyi, wife of retired president, Alhaj Ali Hassan Mwinyi, lent support for this position by refusing to allow her daughter to participate in the Miss Melody beauty contest held at the Starlight hotel.⁴⁶ As this suggests, the cultural values promoted by the government in the late 1960s and early 1970s are still upheld by some Tanzanians to this day.

Following economic and political liberalisation in the 1980s and early 1990s, beauty contests were reintroduced in 1994. Before this period of liberalisation, when

⁴³ According to Ivaska (2004: 106-116) On December 30th 1968, 'Operation Vijana' was launched as one of the first ...national cultural campaigns against 'indecent' dress. Brigadier Rajabu Diwani, Minister L. Sijaona (TANU Youth League Chairman-TYL), Joseph Nyerere (TYL Secretary General), and Moses Mnauye (TYL Deputy Secretary General) were among the TANU Youth League officials who attended and they displayed for the press some example of the perceived to be 'indecent' dress.

⁴⁴ In the letter of 31st August, 1966, Ref. No. CDNC/C.13 written by the Commissioner for culture of the Ministry of Community Development and National Culture to the organisers of the Miss Tanzania ahead of the first-ever beauty contest to be conducted in Tanzania and, which was to be held in 1968, the Commissioner emphasised on importance of observing the nationally accepted dressing codes during this occasion.

⁴⁵ See, also, Lihamba (1991).

⁴⁶ *Dimba* (August 31 to September 6, 1997).

Tanzania followed the policy of ‘Ujamaa na Kujitegemea’ – socialism and self-reliance - people were encouraged to use goods that had been produced within the country. But with the liberalization of trade in the mid-1980s, imported goods flooded into the country, including many associated with promoting new concept of beauty based on modern, urban notions of consumption. It was at this time that female hair salons sprung up and beauty contests began to proliferate.

From the 1980s onwards, the internationalisation of the conceptions, images and meanings of beauty embodied in dress styles created by foreign factories proved to be very lucrative for some local businesses selling items like underwear, brassieres and petticoats.⁴⁷ Alarming, though, this internationalisation of concepts of beauty soon led to the importation of second hand electricity appliances such as hair dryers, hot combs, shaving machines and rollers. Items like these found their way easily into beauty salons and beauty centres without being checked for safety. In the contemporary Tanzanian beauty industry, profit generally takes precedence over all other considerations.

In recent years, it has become increasingly common for beauty shops and salons to be run by men. Congolese men now own some of the most famous modern beauty centres in Tanzania, offering hair-curling, relaxing, weaving, extensions and different styles of so-called traditional hair-plaiting. They also dress brides for their weddings, and in some cases make tailored clothing as an extension to their businesses. At night, most of these salon owners perform music at clubs with a view to attracting female

⁴⁷ This was further encouraged with the opening up by the government of the importation of second-hand clothes, locally known as *mitumba*.

customers to their beauty centres. Beauty salons run by the most famous of these musicians attract large numbers of customers.⁴⁸

The hair-plaiting business, which was previously dominated by female specialists from Tanzania and Uganda, has also become a male domain, in this case one controlled by Maasai migrants.⁴⁹ The success of these migrants in capturing this particular market can be ascribed to the fact that women feel confident in the presence of these skilled indigenous traditionalists.⁵⁰ In contrast to their Congolese rivals, these Maasai men work as security guards at night. As such, they have gained a reputation as responsible, reliable people who can be trusted in all situations. The styles they plait for urban women are similar to those they themselves wear.

This domination of the contemporary Tanzanian urban beauty industry by foreign males and local Maasai migrants raises interesting questions regarding the on-going control men have over large areas of the country's economy, including areas that in other urban communities have gradually been taken over by women. It remains to be seen whether women will begin to make inroads in this industry, or whether they will continue to support its domination by Congolese and Maasai migrants to Tanzanian urban centres.

⁴⁸ Interview with Neema Komba, Dar es Salaam, 28/6/2001, 7/7/2002; Mwanaheri, Dar es Salaam, 8 and 9/4/2001; Sion Nnko, Dar es Salaam, 19/6/2001, 10/7/2002; Mkanula, Dar es Salaam, 4/5/2001, 15/7/20.

⁴⁹ According to Erasmus, Z. (2000: 8) 'In urban Africa today black hairstyles and hairstyling have moved from the kitchen to the street. This shift gives increased visibility and so lends black hairstyles more open to appropriation and commodification'.

⁵⁰ Interview with Neema Komba, Dar es Salaam, 28/6/2001, 7/7/2002; Mwanaheri, Dar es Salaam, 8 and 9/4/2001; Sion Nnko, Dar es Salaam, 19/6/2001, 10/7/2002; Mkanula, Dar es Salaam, 4/5/2001, 15/7/20.

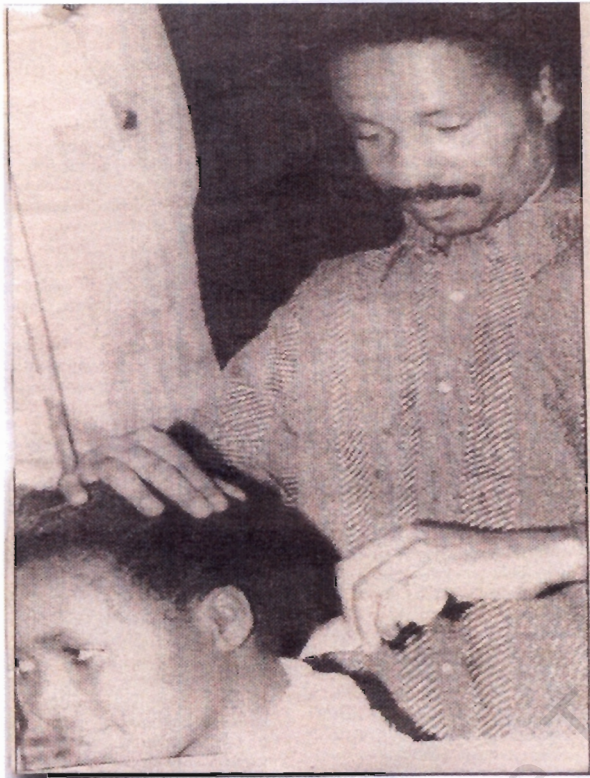


Fig: 6: A man in Dar es Salaam attending a woman's hair at one of the modern urban-based beauty salons run by men. *Dimba*, August 31 to September 6, 1997.



(a)



(b)

Fig: 7: (a) Maasai men plaiting a Dar es Salaam woman's hair to match the (b) traditional (*Otekaa*) Maasai males' hair style. Photographs: Rehema Nchimbi (2003)

Numerous other questions are raised by the sale of beauty products that are clearly dangerous, such as skin lighteners known as *Mkorogo*.⁵¹ In Tanzania, the use of these skin lighteners has been challenged by a number of scholars and medical practitioners. It has been pointed out, for example, that *Mkorogo* can cause skin cancer, liver and brain damage, and eye defects. Dr. Mpola Mwasumbi of Muhimbili Referral Hospital has noted publicly that the chemicals used in these products destroy the melanin cells that protect the skin from albino-like mutations. 'Hydroquinona' chemicals can also blind people if used frequently and without proper prescriptions, while the chemicals can cause pregnancy and birth problems. Similarly, Dr. Charles Range of Mwananyamala Hospital, has argued strongly against *Mkorogo* on the grounds that the mixture of bleach, battery acid, *jaribu* soap and lotion is extremely dangerous.⁵² Basically, the concoction is a complex corrosive chemical, suggesting that the costs of pursuing misplaced notions of beauty are in some cases too high.⁵³ Citing a related case in Czechoslovakia, Chapkis (1986: 74-75) notes that women are often 'Forced by a quest for perfection...as a result of advertisements'. In this case, there wasn't much available for women in terms of fashion and cosmetics at that time. Women consequently 'used...black shoe polish as mascara, which meant that if at any time it got in the eyes it hurt something horrible, but they still did it...anything to look right' (Chapkis, 1986: 75).

The motivations underlying women's use of skin lighteners are always both complex and controversial. They range from a form of black self-hatred, to vying for a husband's favour among rival wives in polygamous African marriages after their

⁵¹ *Mkorogo*, which stems from a Swahili word *koroga* meaning to stir, is used to refer to a concoction of creams and different materials related to beauty, to make detergents women use for skin bleaching.

⁵² *Rai* (September 17 to 23, 1998).

⁵³ *The Sunday Observer* (June 29, 1997).

husband has been linked to a lighter-skinned woman.⁵⁴ According to Burke (1996: 188-190) it demonstrates the inextricable intertwining of consciousness about class and race, but gender also plays a significant role since women continue to use these skin lighteners, notwithstanding the damage (burning) they cause to the skin.



Fig: 8: A woman's skin showing damage caused by corrosive skin lightening creams. Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4032837.stm>

In its effort to safeguard women from the threats posed by these cosmetics,⁵⁵ the Tanzanian government recently banned 100⁵⁶ items associated with women's beauty ranging from soaps to creams. This kind of intervention aimed at promoting women's health obviously differs significantly from earlier attempts by the state to dictate

⁵⁴ See <http://www.africasia.com.icpubs>. See, also, Waters, M. (1986: 9-37); Halprin, S. (1995).

⁵⁵ The users of these skin lighteners become addictive such that '...once burned, one is forever in need of lighteners to prevent becoming even darker than when began' (Burke, 1996: 189-190). In Zimbabwe in the 1980s users '...expressed anger with the government for banning the products...and... confided that the products were still available from smugglers' (Burke, 1996: 190.).

⁵⁶ In Tanzania, the banned items of beauty include commercial products, Mekako, Rico Complexion, Princes, Buton, Extra Clear, Mic, Viva Super Lemon, Ultra Skin Tone, Fade Out, Palmas Skin Success, Fair & White Active Lightening, Nadinola Fade, Clear Essence Medicated Fad, Tura, Ikb, Claire, Miki, Madonna Medicated, Mrembo Medicated, Shirley, Kiss, UNO21, Lolane, Malaika Medicated, Dear Heart, Fair Lady, Jaribu, Body Clear, Moveti, Hamira, Acura, Elegance, Binti Jambo, Fair & Lovely, Age Renewal, Visible Difference, Miss Caroline, Deproson, Musk, Beautiful Beginning, TCB, Secret, Soft & Beautiful and Fashion Fair. In *Nipashe* (July 31, 2004); *Nipashe* (March 22, 2005). See, also, *Nipashe* (April 18, 2005).

fashion trends with a view to promoting nationalist values. As will become clear in the remaining chapters of this thesis, the Tanzanian government's changing role in the promotion of various concepts of beauty has contributed significantly to some of the on-going debates regarding the role of beauty in the lives of contemporary Tanzanian women.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER THREE

BODY, ADORNMENT AND SOCIO-CULTURAL RELATIONS IN PRE-COLONIAL MBUGWE SOCIETY

On the one hand, this chapter retrieves the patterns and practices of women's beauty and the meanings attached to them among the Mbugwe before the advent of colonialism. On the other hand, it highlights the social, cultural and economic relations which reinforced their ability to resist change after the advent of colonialism. As will become clear in my later discussion of the Maasai, the latter trend was not uncommon. But among the Mbugwe, resistance to colonialism was less sustained for various reasons; for example, even before the advent of colonialism they were willing to establish relations with outside groups through marriage and trade.

The Mbugwe live in north-central Tanzania around Lake Manyara, where they practice agriculture and pastoralism (Gray, 1955: 39-40). Historically, their socio-political system was organized along chiefdoms. Several villages were controlled by one chief or *Mosungati*, and each village had a village head who was normally also a clan head. Mwada and Nkaiti were the two most powerful Mbugwe chiefdoms. Mwada had a female *Mosungati* by the name of *Moda*.

Family clans divided themselves according to named sub-chiefdoms. There were in total eighteen clans, which still survive to this day. These are *Vafulu*, *Vachawa*, *Varembo*, *Vaijwa*, *Vaise*, *Vasongo*, *Vaseri*, *Vasalo*, *Vampome*, *Vanarya*, *Valembwa*,

Vakimirye, Vadamba, Vakeye, Vaijavire, Vombe, Vanjare and *Vasiro*.¹ Each clan's women were expected to enact values associated with the clan's name. For example, women belonging to the *Vafulu*, meaning elephant, were supposed to act like mighty animals capable of felling trees.² As this suggests, concepts of female beauty were central to the clan's efforts to maintain its identity, vitality, and power.

The neighbours of the Mbugwe to the east and north were the Maasai, with whom they have long been in close but hostile relations. The Iraqw of Mbulu occupied the plateau above the Rift valley to the west of the Mbugwe, while to the south there was the Gorowa or Wafyome. The Barbeig or Tatog, though not immediate neighbours of the Mbugwe, had intimate contact with them in the past; in fact, through inter-marriage, several of the ruling families of the Mbugwe were of Barbeig origin. The Mbugwe are also closely related to the Warangi of central Tanzania even though they have been separated from this group by intervening communities for many generations (Cory, 1961).



Fig: 9: Barbeig women wearing garments made from skin (*Hang'wenda*), similar to the garments worn by pre-colonial Mbugwe women. Photograph: Jasson Begashe, District Cultural Officer, Babati (2000)

¹ These were grouped into eight sub-chiefdoms, namely, *Ntalambwe, Kerikatey, Onyambori, Dirima, Besi, Doloi* (Idulu), *Nkaiti ya Mweri* and *Shaushi*. See Phillips (1995) on the meanings attached to these culturally constructed names.

² Interview with Zakayo Mariva and Francis M. Mombo, Modori/Mbuyuni, 15/9/2000, 17/9/2000, 16/1/2001, 24/1/2001, 24/3/2002.

Mbugwe concepts of female beauty were influenced by these relations with their neighbours. Mbugwe women can nevertheless be distinguished to this day from those belonging to these neighbouring ethnic groups through their use of tattooing. Among the Mbugwe, *mabolwe*, i.e. marks on each cheek parallel to the eyes, thus served the important purpose of locating and uniting members of the group wherever they went.³ In this and other respects, Mbugwe women upheld the social and cultural values of their group. As the bearers and caretakers of children, they became the nurturers of their community's cultural practices, including those related to concepts of beauty, which had not only physical, but also moral and social dimensions. All of these will be discussed in this chapter.



Fig: 10: Mbugwe women with marks (*Mabolwe*) on their cheeks. Photograph: Edward Sylverster Mombo (2004).

Among the Mbugwe, all economic and social institutions were controlled by an ideology of communal responsibility. Communal units such as the family, clan and

³ Female scarification is common in many African communities. See, for example, Phillips (1995:125-128), who notes that Sande women scarified their cheeks, foreheads and the outer corners of their eyes. These included, *ngaya maki* (tear marks) and *kesi*. See, also, Friday (1999).

ethnic group were considered the proprietors of various ideals of beauty linked to the clan's name. Furthermore, these communities perceived beauty as a God-given,⁴ natural opportunity for maintaining and improving the community's chances of forming compounds through marriage.⁵

Engels (1985) has suggested that although economic production and the distribution of products represent extremely important aspects of human society, reproduction, or the production of human beings themselves, is also crucially significant. Reproduction was a dominant preoccupation of pre-colonial Mbugwe society. It would not be an exaggeration to say that all their institutions were organized around this purpose. In other words, these institutions were geared primarily to maintaining and ensuring the continuity of human life. This concern is explicit in the following song appraising beauty among the Mbugwe:

*Mosiro oyoo ojefa na'ivala mbori, Mosiro na monse, Mosiro njowe.
Mwana wajefa nkemonsinoka, bolwe raikala moi wane. Nende ojeja
na meito waijavire, mwana wangwa okempa mawaso, Mosiro mawe,
komba omweije, ba'nefo kwealareye ha'neke overeye jao nse ya
Mwada ne'tajola ranto chero wane nke'kwarera manja kalama. Ojefa
na monse. Okesesocha ofa nkwanokoye, no'jefa ojefiye mawe wera
monto ne'ja picha ya limasii.*⁶

Literally translated, the above song outlines qualities of a beautiful woman that a man would want to marry, such as markings that can be compared to those of a young fertile goat. In addition to this, she is colourful, glittering and attractive; her shining beauty is more profound when she comes into contact with the rays of the sun; the

⁴ The Mbugwe god known as *Jova* (the Sun) was regarded as a source of light and protection. He was also responsible for mediating social-cultural and economic relations among the different clans.

⁵ Interview with Catherine Bungeya and Magdalena Ndee, Mwada, 2/8/2000, 1/2/2001, 5/2/2001, 15/1/2002, 20/3/2002.

⁶ The names of beautiful girls who were ready for marriage would be mentioned as part of the chorus. Interview with Blasi Gicha, Peter Lubuva, Epimack Michael, Reginald Mosaito, Margareta Joseph, Sangaiwe, 3/8/2000, 26/8/2000, 15/2/2001, 10/1/2002, 7/2/2002.

tattoos on her cheeks are so powerful that they can penetrate the heart of every man; and everybody is proud of her beauty. She therefore deserves to be valued and is considered a saviour of the Mbugwe through her reproductive capacities.⁷ She is a woman to marry who glitters like a diamond. As this song also attests, these notions of female beauty survive to the present despite radical changes in the fabric of Tanzanian life in the course of the 20th century.

Pre-colonial Mbugwe notions of beauty were African and unitary in the sense that the Mbugwe did not conceive of beauty as either strictly physical or simply moral. Rather, they regarded beauty as plural or multi-dimensional, and as involving various aspects such as a woman's body, her manners and health, the decorations she wore, and her intellectual capacity and spirituality.⁸ Among the Mbugwe, beautiful women therefore were those who were not only good-looking, but who had had a moral upbringing, and who decorated themselves with various traditional cosmetics and ornaments. The most beautiful women were neither the fattest nor the thinnest, but of average weight and excellent body structure compared to their age mates. Moreover, beauty was not confined to women of a particular age. Instead, beauty was a life long process. It started with birth and ended with death. It was believed that a woman's body kept regenerating and unfolding throughout her life. Each stage of a woman's development was therefore very significant for the social, cultural and economic well-being of the Mbugwe. Her beauty had to be nurtured and protected throughout her life.⁹

⁷ See, also, Etcoff, N. (1999). Also Okot, p'B. (1966; 60).

⁸ See, also, Boone (1986).

⁹ Interview with Domitila Dako, Maria Njae, Francisca Ninga, Marian Gidaa, Fides Konoko, Pius Morembwa, Ndege Shignida, Mosukuma Salaye, Mwada, 4/8/2000, 7/2/2001, 15/1/2002, 20/3/2002.

The ability to bear children constituted a crucially important aspect of women's beauty among Mbugwe society, not only because it ensured a sufficient source of labour, but, by having children, women kept the identity of Mbugwe society intact and ensured that the community's socio-cultural heritage would be maintained, preserved and transmitted from one generation to another. By increasing the population of a clan, fertile women also contributed to Mbugwe society's military strength. This military strength was required to protect the group against wild animals and enemies like the Maasai cattle raiders.¹⁰

Since ideals of beauty were shaped while a person was still at the embryonic stage, pregnant women were treated with great care lest the unborn child became deformed through illness or excess labour.¹¹ A pregnant woman was not allowed to perform heavy duties such as walking for a long time and fetching water from distance places. On the last days of her pregnancy her own mother would be called to witness her delivery and to help ensure that it went smoothly. If necessary, in the case of difficult births, special medicines were prepared during this delivery, but all women were also given some warmed butter in case the placenta failed to come out completely.¹²

The importance ascribed to looking after these women is further evidenced in the fact that they were assisted during delivery by talented and committed midwives known as

¹⁰ Interview with Zakayo Mariva and Francis Mombo, Mdori/Mbuyuni, 15/9/2000, 17/9/2000, 16/1/2001, 25/1/2001, 24/3/2002. Also Nemani Motakaiko and Nsimba Nkereri, Mawe Mairo, 2/9/2000, 18/1/2001, 16/2/2002.

¹¹ Mbugwe chiefs and sub-chiefs endowed with medical knowledge had as one of their responsibilities to ensure good health among members of their society. All the chiefs in Mbugwe had to be specialists in medicine as a qualification before they were entrusted for the position of chieftaincy. Before any marriage took place both men and women were thoroughly scrutinized to check if either of them or their families had a record of contagious or inherited disease. It was believed that unhealthy parents would bear ill-fated children See, also, Boone (1986).

¹² Interview with Domitila Dako, Mwada, 4/8/2000, 7/2/2001, 15/1/2002.

Vowa.¹³ The *Vowa* monitored the progress of labour pain, the position of the child at the moment of delivery, and the shaping and moulding of the child's head¹⁴ and other parts of the body immediately after birth. This process of shaping the body often continued some time after the birth of the child, for example, if it had a comparatively flat rather than round head.¹⁵

The baby was decorated with strings of beads as soon as it started crawling. These beads could be of any colour as colour had no significant meaning among the Mbugwe, but because the beads themselves were regarded as something special, they helped to enhance the child's beauty. Stringing the beads together, and surrounding the baby with them, was the first step in a long chain of processes that the child would go through to become more and more beautiful as it grew up.¹⁶ Beauty thus unfolded over time.

On reaching puberty, girls had to show a sense of maturity, confidence and independence because they were expected to enter marital relationships soon thereafter. At this stage, the *Kesembe* initiation ceremony played a crucial role in teaching girls the new socio-economic and cultural responsibilities they were about to assume. During this period of initiation, the norms and values of Mbugwe society

¹³ Non-skilled women were also sent to special classes so that they could later become skilled midwives. These midwives were not paid but were given rewards as a token of appreciation by the family of the woman they attended. Under normal circumstance, the midwives became honorary members of the respective families. They were treated with respect, and were accorded a very high status in all social and cultural affairs concerned these families.

¹⁴ Among the Mende the midwives begin rubbing the infant's head, shaping it to make it round and smooth, and pressing the ears to the skull immediately after the head appears, and even before the umbilical cord is cut Boone (1986: 91).

¹⁵ Interview with Domitila Dako, Mwada, 4/8/2000, 7/2/2001, 15/1/2002.

¹⁶ Interview with Domitila Dako, Mwada, 4/8/2000, 7/2/2001, 15/1/2002.

were imparted to these girls. The *Kesembe* ceremonies thus moulded their beauty, and shaped their identities by encouraging them to conform to Mbugwe social practices.¹⁷

In the pre-puberty phase of the *Kesembe* ceremonies, the foundation of what would constitute the beautiful Mbugwe women was first laid down. This included good manners, morals, cleanliness and adherence to Mbugwe cultural norms. For example, the girls were taught greetings and salutations, the appropriate use of language, and proper forms of expression. In addition to this, they learnt from their mothers how to handle and relate to the livestock they would look after in adult life.¹⁸

At the puberty stage of these ceremonies, a series of rituals were performed in which the initiate was transformed from a girl to an adult woman. On the threshold of her paternal home, the girl was slapped on the head with a bunch of millet stalks dipped in beer by her paternal aunt, thus ensuring the blessing and protection of her ancestors, who controlled her fertility. On arriving at the initiation lodge, the initiates, known as *vakesembe*, were rubbed with a special kind of soil known as *nkondose*.¹⁹ Since they sometimes had to stay outdoors, this soil was meant to protect the girls from the cold. But the soil was also was a symbol of transition from childhood to adult status. Because it was regarded as a source of life for the Mbugwe, providing them with pasture for their cattle, goats and sheep, allowing them to grow their cereals, fruits and vegetables, and giving them cosmetic materials, it was central to their existence.

¹⁷ Interview with Makrina Kebola, Stella Isdori, Edeltruda Logo, Mwada, 22/8/2000, 13/2/2001, 20/3/2002. See, also, Mdachi, P. L. (1990).

¹⁸ Interview with Makrina Kebola, Stella Isdori, Edeltruda Logo, Mwada, 22/8/2000, 13/2/2001, 20/3/2002.

¹⁹ The soil was dug by older women, at Maweni, which is respected as the first settlement of the Mbugwe ancestors. The women who undertook this task were supposed to be clean, i.e., they could not undertake this task if they were menstruating. See, also, Bliss, S.H. (2003: 18).

Rituals involving the use of soil thus served to reinforce the importance of production and reproduction in the development of concepts of beauty among Mbugwe.²⁰

During these *Kesembe* ceremonies, older women instructed the girls on life in general and, in particular, on what the girls would encounter when they got married. The girls were equipped with cultural knowledge about traditions, customs, laws and appropriate behaviour. But they were also taught practical things about health, medicine, agriculture, cattle keeping technologies, diplomacy, the environment and demography. This comprehensive, integrated knowledge furnished the initiates with the ability, power and dignity to perform their adult roles and responsibilities.²¹

Before the initiates could rejoin society they were rubbed with the intestines of a Ram known as *ofu*.²² This act was meant to ‘cool down’ the initiates’ bodies after the hard work of passing through the training they received in the *Kesembe* initiation lodge. The cooling down, called *vare vakeforiwa mevere* in the language spoken by the Mbugwe, underlined the fact that the rite of passage from childhood to adult status is tough in the sense that these two stages in a woman’s life constitute totally distinct phases in their growth as human beings.

²⁰ Interview with Makrina Kebola, Stella Isdori, Edeltruda Logo, Mwada, 22/8/2000, 13/2/2001, 20/3/2002. See, also, Phillips (1995: 82-83): Initiates in the Sande society were smeared with white clay on their upper torsos and faces. Here the white colour signified dedication to the spirit world, cleanliness, purity, maturity and readiness for adulthood responsibilities. It is also a symbol of fertility through associations with semen and breast milk.

²¹ Interview with Fides Konoko, Elizabeth Hondi, Domitila Kako, Mwada, 15/1/2002, 20/3/2002.

²² The male sheep symbolized the ideas of calmness, humility, and appreciation for the opposite sex. Slaughtering a ewe would mean terminating the reproductive powers the girls were supposed to possess. Interview with Daranga Dagey, Jomba Yasso, Thomas Marende, Michael Motori, Sangaiwe, 28/8/2000, 24/2/2001, 7/2/2002. Also Catherine Bungunya and Domitila Dako, Mwada, 15/1/2002, 20/3/2002.

The term, *vare vakeforiwa mevere* evokes the idea of making a knife from a piece of iron ore. The iron ore is heated at a very high temperature. At the same time, it is beaten to turn it into the right shape and size. The process ends by cooling the hot iron ore with cold water. The girls were similarly processed in order to mould them into perfect, beautiful Mbugwe women. By cooling them at the end, they were healed and the girls were thus helped to adjust to a new social and cultural domain. To maximize the cooling effect of the intestines rubbed onto their bodies, the sheep's skin was sliced into small pieces and tied around the graduates' left hands, which is close to the heart, i.e. the moral centre of all human beings. The cooling therefore also affected the initiates' hearts.²³

By the end of the *Kesembe* ceremonies, the initiates had to be strong and ready to fulfil their new roles. To achieve this aim they ate soft milk food (*tante*), which was mixed with goat's ghee to build their bodies. This concern about diet was central to perceptions of beauty in Mbugwe society. '*Ukila ovyo ovyo utaweza kuwa na nguvu ya kubeba mimba na kuzaa kweli?* and *mwanamke asiyejua kula vizuri hata watoto wake watakufa na njaa*',²⁴ are two assertions mentioned by respondents when discussing the relationship between proper feeding patterns and women's beauty. Literally, the respondents argued that a woman who is poorly fed is likely to face problems during delivery, and children who are reared by a mother who lacks knowledge about proper food preparation and feeding, are likely to die of hunger.

²³ According to Boone (1986: 59-78): Among the Mende, initiation entailed the girls going through insults, pain, injury, shocks and stress, in order for them to gain knowledge, power, and the self-confidence they needed to fulfil the successful life of a woman.

²⁴ This was mentioned by the respondents during interviews, which were conducted in 2000, 2001, and 2002. See the list of respondents from Mbugwe in the Appendix. 3.



Fig: 11: Women preparing *tante*. Photograph: Jasson Begashe, District Cultural Officer, Babati (2000).

Successful graduates of the *Kesembe* ceremonies were rewarded with different gifts such as beads, ghee, cattle, goats and millet flour. The initiates' main responsibility following their training was to reconcile theory and practice under the custodianship of all members of Mbugwe society. If they showed any shortcomings or defects, the society continued to instruct and criticise them.²⁵

It is important to note, in passing, that this initiation for girls was performed together with that of the boys. In other words, the moulding of women's beauty could not be complete without that of their male counterparts. In the process, the Mbugwe created clearly defined socio-cultural and gender roles.

Physical attributes also played a significant role in Mbugwe notions of female beauty linked to fertility. By looking at physical changes in a woman's body at different stages in her life, the Mbugwe was able to predict how she was likely to contribute to the society's wealth and well-being by bearing children. The size of a woman's breasts helped to indicate whether she had reached marital age and, also, the amount of milk she was likely to produce when breast-feeding her babies. Women's bodies

²⁵ Interview with Zakayo Mariva, Mdori, 15/9/2000, 16/1/2001, 24/3/2002.

were like granaries²⁶ storing their fertility. Physical beauty thus enhanced the vitality of the body and through this vitality, its ability to fulfil its social and cultural roles. These notions of physical beauty were also used to assist the community in determining whether a particular woman was mature and confident enough to carry the responsibilities of motherhood.

The power of women's beauty was not confined to the domestic sphere, however. Women who were tall, hardworking, polite, confident and intelligent, and who had clear and commanding voices, were in many cases assigned leadership positions. The administration²⁷ of *turi* (wards) were and still are in the hands of beautiful women to this day. On the other hand, a woman's beauty could in some cases force her to marry against her will, for although a beautiful Mbugwe woman had the power to choose her future partner, a woman who attracted a chief's attention during dancing festivals could never refuse his offer of marriage regardless of the wealth of her family. Because the chief's wives represented their respective families and clans at the chief's palace, this attention was generally welcomed by a woman's family, if not necessarily by herself. Indeed, every clan tried to marry their daughters to chiefs because the families related to the chief's wives benefited from the material support and prestige this association afforded them. For example, in times of hunger it was the chief's wives' families who were first given access to food.²⁸ Beauty thus became a powerful

²⁶ This notion is rooted in the biological capacity to 'keep' a foetus in the womb for nine months. Interview with Makrina Kebola, Stella Isdori, Edeltruda Logo, Mwada, 22/8/2000, 13/2/2001, 20/3/2002.

²⁷ Gender divisions of labour allowed women to work near the homestead while men, who looked after cows and defend the community against wild animals, and threats from the Maasai, were more mobile. Interview with Patrick Kenda, Joseph Moba, Francis Bogoda, Fidelis Dida, Mwada, 8/9/2000, 12/1/2001, 5/3/2002.

²⁸ Interview with Zakayo Mariva and Francis Mombo, Mdori/Mbuyuni, 15/9/2000, 17/9/2000, 16/1/2001, 25/1/2001, 24/3/2002. Also Godfrid T. Kasi and Benge Kengetu, Magugu, 22/9/2000, 5/1/2001, 30/3/2002.

unifying factor in Mbugwe society, in some cases allowing people to transcend established social, economic and political boundaries.



Fig: 12:²⁹ Zulu Reed Dance, first introduced in the mid-1980s, which has cultural meanings and functions similar to the dance for displays of beauty among the pre-colonial Mbugwe.

According to the Mbugwe, all good women were tall, and they had light, shining skin. Their uncovered, stiff breasts, were most beautiful if they were erect, and their ears were always pierced.³⁰ Adult women kept their teeth white, but removed the two upper front incisors. Concerning their hair, Mbugwe women preferred short, healthy hair, cut in the *onererera* style, so that the hair around the forehead was longer than the rest. But this hairstyle was functional as well as aesthetically pleasing for it acted as a support when carrying water, firewood and cereals.³¹

Dress was also seen as important, however, so much that some interviewees described the body as a home for richly adorned garments. In the past, Mbugwe women wore

²⁹ See <http://www.afritopic.com/afritopic-people-culture-a.htm>.

³⁰ Interview with Makrina Kebola, Stella Isdori, Edeltruda Logo, Mwada, 22/8/2000, 13/2/2001, 20/3/2002.

³¹ Interview with Pius Morembwa, Mosukuma Salaye and Ndege Shignida, Mwada, 4/8/2000; 8/1/2001; 2/2/2002.

Kesene cha Makoreryo/Bande, which are similar to modern *khanga*.³² But unlike these modern *khanga*, which are decorated with pictures, flowers and various special message, i.e. proverbs and idioms, Mbugwe women sewed beads onto their garments based on abstract drawings called *ntoto*. These were round shapes that looked like ostrich eggs but do not appear to have had any special meanings.

Kesene cha Mokoreryo/Bande were also decorated with *nyenje*, a loose fringe at the garment's end. Sheep or goatskin was used in making the *Kesene cha Mokoreryo/Bande*, but dresses could also be made from antelope or zebra skin if sheep or goat skins were not available. In contrast to these ordinary women, the dress of the female chief, *Moda*, was always made from the skin of six female goats, thus indicating that her power and fertility were elevated above that of other Mbugwe women.³³ The symbolic significance attached to goatskin in this context encouraged widespread comparison between beautiful women and young goats.



Fig: 13: A skin garment decorated with beads in the *ntoto* pattern. Photograph: Rehema Nchimbi (2002).

³² The important role *khanga* play in the history of Tanzanian concepts of beauty is discussed in Chapter Four.

³³ Interview with Zakayo Mariva and Francis Mombo, Mdori/Mbuyuni, 15/9/2000, 17/9/2000, 16/1/2001, 25/1/2001, 24/3/2002. Also Godfrid T. Kasi and Bengé Kengetu, Magugu, 22/9/2000, 5/1/2001, 30/3/2002. See, also, Murra (1989: 275-302); Calefato (2000: 195-204); Parkins (2002: 2).



Fig: 14: Skirt-like garments made of beads. Photograph: Jasson Begashe, District Cultural Officer, Babati (2000).

Not all the beauty items used by Mbugwe women could be obtained in the areas in which they lived. They got copper rings and necklaces from the Barbeig, while some types of beads were imported through long distance trade along the eastern coast as early as the 7th century. These beads entered present-day Tanzania from Asia across the Indian Ocean (Iliffe, 1979). The Mbugwe supplied goats, eggs, game meat, hides, pots, baskets, calabashes, milk and milk products, arrows, soda and cereals in exchange for these ornaments of beauty. As Eicher and Sciamia observe regarding the social, cultural and economic functions of beads:

Beads have been used since antiquity not only to dress the body but also as a measure of value in economic and ritual exchanges. Their popularity never waned...their trade has enjoyed an international revival. Beads have deep and multiple meanings...together with garments they reflect age, gender and social status, and are vehicle through which people store, exchange and transmit wealth.³⁴

Strong exchange relationship also developed between the Mbugwe and the Nyiramba, Rangi, Gorowa and Iraqw.³⁵ In some cases, the Mbugwe formed social and cultural bonds with their trading partners that often culminated in marital relations. In these

³⁴ Eicher and Sciamia, eds., 'Beads and Beads Makers: Gender, Material Culture and Meaning' (Dec. 2002). In http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb341/is_200212/ai_hibm1G110735047.

³⁵ Women of the Iraqw society, wore dresses made of animal skins and which were decorated with glass beads, sinew thread, and metal bells; their dressing styles were related to changes of the women's status, i.e. from initiation to adulthood. See <http://www.artweb.com/Guggenheim/Africa/east.html>

instances, beauty functioned as a political agent facilitating interactions, not only inside, but also outside the community's boundaries.

Chiefs played a key role in moderating the trade and other social and cultural relations that emanated from these inter-ethnic trading relationships. By controlling the trade in items of beauty, they ultimately monopolised the social and cultural relations spawned by women's beauty.



Fig: 15: Barbeig women wearing ornaments made from beads, copper, and bones of animals. Photograph: Jasson Begashe, District Cultural Officer, Babati (2004).



Fig: 16: A Barbeig woman sewing beads onto a garment made from animal skins (*Hang'wenda*). Photograph: Jasson Begashe, District Cultural Officer, Babati (2000).

Throughout the pre-colonial period, beads³⁶ played a particularly important role in the adornment of Mbugwe women. Thus, for example, thin white beads called *myaola*, were worn as necklaces, while those that were worn around the heads, were called *mweisombe*. They also wore a small hat consisting of various coloured beads, called *sibika*, and shoes made from cowhide that were similarly decorated with beads. The importance of beads is further evidenced by the fact that Mbugwe women could not qualify as beautiful if they were without *visinga*, beads worn around the waist. Some women wore up to 200³⁷ *visinga* at a time. Accompanying these *visinga* were *menkutu*. These were beads joined together to make an apron-like garment that was used to cover both the middle and lower abdomen.³⁸

Other materials used to adorn the body included leg decorations made from ostrich eggshells and from broken calabashes, and smoothed stones called *nkeka*. Bangles made from elephant tusks, called *mpoo*, and earrings made from giraffe tusks, called *metampe*, were also widely worn, while necklaces called *vindindii*, that descended down to the waist, were equipped with special sound-producing things like the bells.³⁹

In addition to beads, Mbugwe women used a wide range of cosmetics to beautify themselves. Knowledge about these cosmetics and perfumes was indispensable for all

³⁶ Sciama (2001: 1-7) noted: 'Beads are among the most ancient and widespread of human ornaments. In parts of Africa beads fashioned from ostrich shell were made as early as ten thousand years BC. Throughout the centuries materials used to make beads included stones, shells, clay, seeds, animals' teeth and bone, or metal such as tin, iron, copper and gold. Glass beads found by archaeologists in coastal areas of Southern and Eastern Africa were imported from Egypt and Rome through the Sahara since the 4th century AD'. See, also, Kloppe (1995:46) on the history of beads on the African continent, introduced through trade with India and, later, Europe.

³⁷ They were worn in a pattern which looked like a mini skirt.

³⁸ Interview with Fides Konoko, Elizabeth Hondi, Domitila Kako, Mwada, 15/1/2002, 20/3/2002. Also Makrina Kebola, Stella Isdori, Edeltruda Logo, Mwada, 22/8/2000, 13/2/2001, 20/3/2002.

³⁹ Interview with Fides Konoko, Elizabeth Hondi, Domitila Kako, Mwada, 15/1/2002, 20/3/2002. Also Makrina Kebola, Stella Isdori, Edeltruda Logo, Mwada, 22/8/2000, 13/2/2001, 20/3/2002.

members of the community, but their application had to be compatible with the socio-ecological stability of all creatures in the environment. For example, it was believed that the milking of cows would be affected if they smelt anything strange or unusual, and since this task was a woman's responsibility, care had to be taken when wearing cosmetics in the presence of these animals.

The five most popular perfumes or *osula* that were used by Mbugwe women were *kulukuku*, *lotungo*, *lofunto*, *manyengo* and *yanyu*. All of these perfumes were made from natural substances. *Kulukuku*, for example, was made from timber dust derived from thorny trees, the leaves of which were used as animal fodder, whereas *lotungo* and *lofunto* were made from legume-like plants that were crushed and left to ferment. *Mayengo* was made from special leaves the women chewed and soaked in water. This water was then sprayed on their clothes. And *yanyu* leaves, which were also crushed, were put into a calabash with a tight lid. After two to three days, the desired aroma would have been generated.⁴⁰

In addition to these notions of beauty, enhanced through dress and cosmetics, women were expected to behave with kindness and integrity. This entailed paying respect to all people irrespective of age. Women were also expected to be generous and hard-working, and to avoid socially disruptive practices such as prostitution, alcoholism and gossiping. The term *Watola chomei*, referring to an iron axe, was used to praise a man who had married a well-disciplined woman. This beautiful, well-disciplined woman was compared to an axe because axes were used to cut down trees, chop logs into small pieces, clear bushes and forests for cultivation, and for hunting. In addition

⁴⁰ Interview with Magdalena Ndee and Catherine Bungeya, Mwada, 2/8/2000, 1/2/2001. Also all female respondents.

to this, the axe was used as a weapon for defence. These well-disciplined women differed from *mata mbeva*, literally rats' ears, who moved from one person to another gossiping and quarrelling with people.⁴¹

Uniqueness and perfection are also said to have enhanced the beauty of Mbugwe women. These attributes were articulated by comparing the beautiful women to ostrich eggs, *yae ra nungu*. Among the Mbugwe, these eggs cost a fortune. Very few people could therefore afford one. Moreover, an ostrich does not easily allow its eggs to be taken away: it fights very hard to protect them, threatening the lives of those who try to snatch them. For this reason, anyone who managed to bring an ostrich egg to the chief was declared a hero and his home was decorated with ostrich eggshells attached to the roof.⁴²

Another bird that featured prominently in the characterisation of beautiful women was the *Rimo*, literally, sea gull. The *Rimo* is a white bird that prefers to stay in the water. Women who kept themselves, their children, and their environment clean were named after this sea gull. Only women who were committed to, and capable of planning their schedule for the day were able to maintain a clean environment that in some cases required the use of water.⁴³

⁴¹ Interview with Fides Konoko, Elizabeth Hondi, Domitila Kako, Mwada, 15/1/2002, 20/3/2002. Also Makrina Kebola, Stella Isdori, Edeltruda Logo, Mwada, 22/8/2000, 13/2/2001, 20/3/2002.

⁴² Interview with Zakayo Mariva and Francis Mombo, Mdori/Mbuyuni, 15/9/2000, 17/9/2000, 16/1/2001, 25/1/2001, 24/3/2002. Also Godfrid T. Kasi and Bengé Kengetu, Magugu, 22/9/2000, 5/1/2001, 30/3/2002.

⁴³ Interview with Zakayo Mariva and Francis Mombo, Mdori/Mbuyuni, 15/9/2000, 17/9/2000, 16/1/2001, 25/1/2001, 24/3/2002. Also Godfrid T. Kasi and Bengé Kengetu, Magugu, 22/9/2000, 5/1/2001, 30/3/2002.

This celebration of endurance and hard work also finds expression in terms like *mosiya*, literally meaning, one who grinds.⁴⁴ Women's skills in grinding cereals were important for the survival of their families, who relied on their wives and mothers to make flour from millet for stiff porridge. In contrast to these women, there were the *yaye/ochunkuna*, women who were said to be delicate, sophisticated and self-absorbed, qualities that were frowned upon in a society where it was important to be socialised and to act appropriately in all situations.⁴⁵ Beautiful women in Mbugwe society were therefore duty bound to work hard.

At the same time, they were supposed to be generous and ready to help their relatives, colleagues, friends, and neighbours. For this reason, even if a woman was physically very attractive, but was lazy, she would not be counted as beautiful. The home of lazy women is said to have lacked sufficient quantities of stored food, leading to hunger, malnutrition and other related diseases. When these women failed to clean the cows' and goats sheds properly, these enclosures generated bad smells, flies and other insects, ultimately creating an environment conducive to spreading diseases. Friends and neighbours shunned these dirty women who were consequently excluded from the day-to-day social and cultural networks that supported the social fabric of Mbugwe society. The implications of this social isolation were considerable, mainly because it was difficult to sustain a family practicing a pastoral way of life if it was left to operate on its own. Grazing cattle, managing land for pasture, and securing domestic animals against predators depended on the Mbugwe working cooperatively.

⁴⁴ Even after the introduction of modern milling techniques in the 20th century, some old people preferred flour milled on traditional grinding stones, because it didn't carry a smell of diesel oil.

⁴⁵ Interview with Makrina Kebola, Stella Isdori, Edeltruda Logo, Mwada, 22/8/2000, 13/2/2001, 20/3/2002.



Fig: 17: A woman grinding millet. Photograph: Jasson Begashe, District Cultural Officer, Babati (2000).

Although beauty was displayed in the normal day-to-day activities of women, there were also special occasions when the community gathered to assess women's beauty, for example, at the dancing festivals that took place at weddings and other ceremonies. Praise songs, *weisheriwa*, were composed for women who excelled at these dances. Awarding them with beads, which people removed from their own bodies, also played an important role in showing appreciation for their capacity to dance beautifully. But these donations were always temporary, for although gifts of this kind singled out particular women in the community, their beauty ultimately belonged to the society as a whole.⁴⁶ It was the community that created and owned the standards, patterns and meanings of beauty. Returning the beads to their owners thus underlined this relationship between a beautiful woman and the community.

Largely due to the impact of colonialism, Mbugwe notions of beauty were eventually influenced by the availability of new materials and the emergence of different values.

⁴⁶ Interview with Fides Konoko, Elizabeth Hondi, Domitila Kako, Mwada, 15/1/2002, 20/3/2002. Also Makrina Kebola, Stella Isdori, Edeltruda Logo, Mwada, 22/8/2000, 13/2/2001, 20/3/2002.

For example, Mbugwe women began to wear manufactured *khanga* and commercially made shoes and socks. They also started using modern creams, toilet and laundry soaps, and other cosmetics. But the most far-reaching agents of change were religion, tourism, education, and urbanization. The first church to be built in the Mbugwe area in the early 20th century was a Roman Catholic one that encouraged women to wear modern skirts. Skin garments were not allowed in the church because they were considered primitive (Hay, 2004: 70-71). The pictures of angels and Mother Mary displayed in this church also provided totally different models of beauty from those traditionally practiced by the Mbugwe.⁴⁷

Schools, including mission schools, had a similar impact on indigenous practices and values. As Eicher and Sumberg (1995: 303) point out: 'Christian missionaries ... affected the dress patterns of many of the people they came in contact with....Cultural and religious values were seen to walk hand in hand, one changing in conjunction with the other'. Introducing the very young to new ideas and values, these schools played a major role in the gradual erosion of indigenous values in the course of the 20th century.

The development of National Parks,⁴⁸ visited by foreign tourists, introduced new ideas about dress, partly because the game wardens working in these parks were instructed to combat poaching. Hunting was therefore restricted, denying the Mbugwe access to the animal skins and horns they once used to decorate their bodies. Instead of wearing earrings from giraffes' horns, they thus had to rely more and more on the use of

⁴⁷ Interview with Zakayo Mariva and Francis Mombo, Mdori/Mbuyuni, 15/9/2000, 17/9/2000, 16/1/2001, 25/1/2001, 24/3/2002. Also Godfrid T. Kasi and Bengé Kengetu, Magugu, 22/9/2000, 5/1/2001, 30/3/2002.

⁴⁸ See MNRT-W (1998) *The Wildlife Policy of Tanzania*. See, also, Kjekshus, H. (1989); Troupe, R. S. (1940).

copper and other metals. Women also began to migrate to nearby towns like Arusha in search of jobs. Employed as barmaids, guest attendants and hotel chefs, they encountered foreign notions of beauty that encouraged them to change in an effort to gain acceptance in their new, urban environments.⁴⁹

The new forms of employment tourism afforded especially young men as tourists' guides and game scouts also had a positive impact on traditionalist practices, however, for although this form of employment removed these youths from their community, part of their salaries were kept to buy cattle and goats, which they took to their rurally – based relatives to look after.⁵⁰ In the process, they retained links with their traditional roots, thus helping to sustain both the pastoral economy of the Mbugwe and the survival of pre-colonial cultural values, including those associated with women's beauty.



Fig: 18: Mbugwe women wearing adapted modern ethnic dress. Photograph: Edward Sylvester Mombo (2004).⁵¹

⁴⁹ Interview with Mbuo Isunga, Mwada, 4/8/2000, 2/2/2002. Also Nsimba Nkereri and Nemani Motakaiko, Mawe Mairo, 2/9/2000, 18/1/2001, 14/1/2002.

⁵⁰ Interview with Stella Isdori and Edeltruda Logo, Mwada, 22/8/2000, 13/2/2001, 20/3/2002. Also Epimack Michael, Sangaiwe, 9/8/2000. Also Eliya Chondo, Lucas Eliya and Njala Lilo, Kisangaji, 12/9/2000, 20/1/2001, 2/1/2002.

⁵¹ See, also, Wetters, L. (1995).

Partly because these and other new forms of employment have facilitated this kind of continuity, pastoralism, healing and rainmaking practices have survived to this day. In many cases, healers in particular have also contributed to the restoration of pre-colonial notions of women's beauty by marrying only 'traditionally' beautiful women who are entrusted with preparing the medicines these male healers use. The preparation of these medicines requires attention to both detail and mental stability. Women married to traditional healers are therefore required to look and behave in the same way pre-colonial Mbugwe women did. These women rarely go to church or attend modern public social and cultural functions for fear of detrimentally affecting the medicine prescribed to clients.⁵² Traditional notions of beauty thus continue to play an integral role in ideas about health and well-being among the Mbugwe. Indeed, even now, it is partly through celebrating the power of women's beauty that the continuity of this group has been ensured, at least for the present, if not for the future.

⁵² Interview with (names withheld) 10/1/2001, 7/2/2002.

CHAPTER FOUR

COLONIALISM, TRANSFORMATION AND THE SURVIVAL OF PRE-COLONIAL IDEAS OF BEAUTY AMONG NASCENT COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNITIES IN ARUSHA

Policies on the economy, urbanization, labour, and socio-cultural activities not only of the colonial government, but also the newly independent state of Tanzania, have had a massive impact on contemporary conceptions of female beauty. These policies provided the basis for, on the one hand, the emergence of a cosmopolitan consumption culture that created markets for industrially manufactured commodities, including items used for women's beauty. On the other hand, though, they created conditions that ensured the survival of values and materials associated with pre-colonial notions of female beauty among groups like the Maasai and, as we have already seen, also among the Mbugwe living to the north-east of present-day Arusha. As will become clear in the course of this chapter, although the incompatibility between pastoralism and the colonial and post-colonial economy led to the Maasai becoming sidelined in the course of the 20th century, this also allowed them to survive independently, and to rely on institutions and practices that supported their cultural values.¹ Moreover, primarily because of their fierce resistance to change, they ultimately became a major tourist attraction in the post-independence period.

Arusha, Tanzania's northern capital, has been chosen as a case study for this thesis because it exemplifies the co-existence of the two seemingly incompatible trends of beauty mentioned above. As will become clear in the course of this chapter, these two

¹ Falola, T. (2003) noted: 'Colonialism experience transformed African cultures to an extent that...to many...it called for profound adjustments to new realities as they benefit or suffer from the consequences of imposition and spread of alien ideas...Europeans were able to give more of their cultures to Africans, using a variety of means and institutions'. See, also, Wamba dia Wamba (1991).

notions of beauty sometimes overlapped, leading to the emergence of hybrid identities. But clashes between the two were also common, reflecting the contradictory nature of the socio-economic relations that sustained them.

The Maasai (Simonson, 1955:27) are the indigenous inhabitants of the area where Arusha was built, but they were displaced due to both colonialism and the pressures of urban development, and were consequently forced to move to the outskirts of this area in the course of the 20th century. Partly because of this experience, they retained a fierce commitment to their own practices and institutions, often actively resisting outside influences. Originally, the Maasai were known as the *Il-Arusa*. The term *Maasai*, which is now used in reference to this group, comes from a Maasai word referring to a language called *Maa*, hence the *Maa* - speakers.²

In contrast to contemporary urban concepts of beauty, which are both secular and highly commercialised, Maasai perceptions of beauty were, and still are, deeply embedded in their belief in two Gods (Simonson, 1955: 54-55).³ Firstly, there is the Red God called *E'ngai* who is the Lord of Heaven. *E'ngai* formerly lived in a mountain called *Oldonyo L'engai*. Then there is the Black God called *Olapa*, who is the God of Land. The Maasai believed that these two Gods initially lived together. But in the process of creation and re-creation, heaven and earth were split apart, leading to a separation of the two Gods.⁴ The Red God (*E'ngai*) rewarded the Maasai

² The Maasai are closely related to and share a common language with the Samburu, Turkana, and Pokot. See <http://www.great-adventures.com/destinations/tanzania/maasai.html>. See, also, <http://www.authorsden.com/visit/viewarticle.asp?Author ID=5240&id5395>.

³ See, also, Mbiti, J. S. (1969).

⁴ These Maasai believe that God granted them all cattle for safe keeping. See, also, <http://www.masai-mara.com/mmmaa.htm>.

with cattle, sheep and goats from heaven.⁵ They thus became pastoralists, eating mainly meat, milk and blood, and using products from these animals for beautification. This use of animal products for cosmetics purposes stemmed from the Maasai belief that their God dictated the values and norms they were expected to uphold.

Since the land was believed to have been given to them by their Black God, who also gave them grass to feed their cattle, the Maasai did not cultivate the earth. But because of the central role it played in Maasai concepts of beauty, they were allowed to dig the soil to look for cosmetics like the red soil called *E'lukaria*, the yellowish soil called *Esin'di*, and the whitish soil called *Enguróto*, that they applied as both day-to-day make-up and on special occasions.⁶



Fig: 19: Maasai women selling the red ochre (*E'lukaria*) at Modori, close to Tarangire National Park. Photograph: Jasson Begashe, District Cultural Officer, Babati (2004).

⁵ 'Without the land and cattle, there will be no Maasai'. In <http://www.stp.usf.edu/~jsokolov/211maasai.htm>. See, also, <http://www.wildwatch.com/resources/other/maasai.asp>.

⁶ Interview with Sion, Arusha, 2/10/ 2000 and 3/10/2000. Also Naishiye and Nanginyi, Arusha, 16/10/200 and 20/10/2000.

In pre-colonial times, the cosmetic soils used by the Maasai were obtained at a marketplace known as *Kisongo-Kambi ya Maziwa*. Because this site (the place of *E'lukaria*), was considered the centre of Maasai unity, the place where their spiritual and social-cultural institutions were reinforced and consolidated, it was highly treasured and protected. Only respected age regiment leaders were allowed inside the pit to dig the soil.⁷ Other important soils, like the yellowish soil or *Esindi*, and the whitish *Eng'uruto*, used mainly during initiation ceremonies (*Jando*), came from Monduli.⁸ But access to these pits became increasingly difficult once colonial settlers and administrators moved into the area of modern-day Arusha at the end of the 19th century (Ndagala, 1998: 150-168).

Although they sometimes hunted for wild animals, the garments commonly worn by the Maasai (called *Enjoni*) were made from the skins of the domestic animals given to them by the Red God. Even when the *Morani*, the Maasai warriors, killed a lion, they did not skin it. They only cut off the head before taking it to their elders, who displayed it in public as a testimony to the bravery of the warriors. These *Morani* all married⁹ beautiful women, i.e. women who had gone through initiation (*A'murata* or *Jando*).

Girls (*E'ndito*) between the ages of 15 and 20 were considered to be ready for initiation because by then they were regarded as mature enough to carry 'heavy' socio-cultural and economic responsibilities, including the responsibility of bearing children. The initiation ceremonies of these girls began with circumcision. Early in

⁷ See http://www.insideafricanart.com/Artists%20Main%20Pages/Ole_Lolii_Paul_main.htm.

⁸ Interview with Motejo Ole, Arusha, 10/10/2000. Also Juma Laizer, Arusha, 11/10/2000 and 20/10/2000.

⁹ Maasai men can marry once they reach the senior warrior age group, which lasts for about fifteen years, and after which one is eligible to become the *oloiboni*, tribal leader, soothsayer, priest, and prophet. See http://www.insideafricanart.com/Artists%20Main%20Pages/Ole_Kolii_Paul_main.htm.

the morning at around four, the initiates were gathered outside before, their black clothes, *Kaniki*, symbolizing childhood and the protection of the Black God,¹⁰ were stripped from their bodies. Thereafter the initiates were bathed with cold water in preparation for the circumcision ceremony. This water was mixed with crushed leaves from a plant known as *Embere-a-baba*, literally, the ‘father’s spear’¹¹, which had been left outside overnight. These leaves acted as both a disinfectant and a cooling agent, thus anaesthetizing the girls who had to demonstrate endurance throughout this process. Abusive and provocative songs such as the popular song, *Osi-ngolyo losivolyo*, were sung at this stage to test the girls’ maturity, confidence, and ability to control anger, qualities that were, and still are, regarded as crucial indices of beauty in married Maasai women.¹²

Colour¹³ played a very significant role in notions of beauty upheld both during and after this initiation ceremony. This is clear from the fact that the initiates’ bodies were anointed with white clay, *Enguróto*, for the entire initiation period. This clay had both ritual and therapeutic functions: by covering the exposed parts of the body, it protected the girls’ modesty; mixed with animal fat, it was also used to clean their bodies and protect their skins. The whiteness of the clay, which symbolized the idea of purity, neutrality and mediation between the Red and Black Gods, had the further

¹⁰ More about the social and cultural meanings attached to dress, see, also, Perani, J. and Wolf, N. H. (1999: 25-26); Feeley-Harnik (1989: 73-116); Schneider, J. and Weiner, A. B. (1989: 1); Parkins, W. (2002: 102-103); Fair, L. (2004: 13).

¹¹ This plant has been used for ritual practices among the Maasai.

¹² Interview with Sion, Arusha, 2/10/ 2000 and 3/10/2000. Also Naishiye and Nanginyi. Arusha, 16/10/200 and 20/10/2000.

¹³ Red *orodo* was associated with the Red God; black *rorok/enarok*, with the Black God; green *oronyori/enangori*, with grass for pastures; white *orboror/inaibori*, with purity and spirituality; blue *ordisai/enau*, was given an equal status to green; and yellow *orturere/mburia*, brown *erenchi* and orange *siktoi/tulelei*, were secondary colours. See, also, Renne, E. P. (1995: 117-136) on aspects of the meanings attached to the colour blue, green, black, etc. during Bunu marriages. See, also, Falasca-Zamponi, S. (2002: 145-165) on meanings attached to black colour of the ‘black shirts’, which were worn by the Italian Fascists.

important function of ensuring these Gods' protection as the overseers of beauty.¹⁴ After this initiation ceremony, the girls (*E'sangiki*) started wearing red clothes as an indication of their maturity and readiness to take on the responsibilities of married women, and as a sign of the protection they now received from the Red God.¹⁵



Fig: 20: Maasai youths in black clothing during initiation. Photograph: Jasson Begashe, District Cultural Officer, Babati (2002).

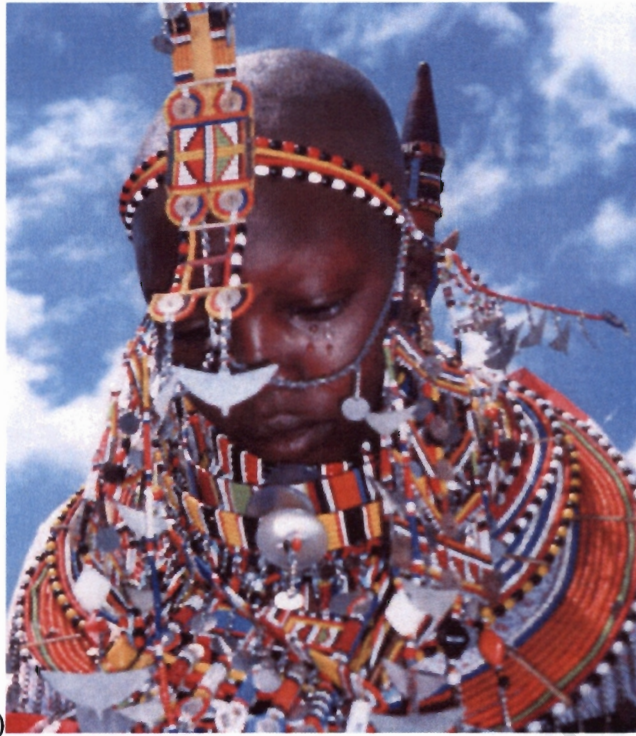


(a)

Fig: 21 (a): Maasai girls in red clothing after initiation. Photograph: Songa Mandao, Mijingu close to Tarangire National Park (2004).

¹⁴ Interview with El Moloimet and Mollel Laltaika, Arusha, 3/10/2000, 6/10/2000, 22/10/2000.

¹⁵ Interview with Sion, Arusha, 2/10/ 2000 and 3/10/2000. Also Naishiye and Nanginyi, Arusha, 16/10/200 and 20/10/2000.



(b)

Fig: 21 (b): A Maasai bride wearing a headdress that symbolises her passage into adulthood. Source: www.laleyio.com/marriage.html.

According to Eicher, the dress worn by women often emphasizes socio-biological development, beginning with childhood. Also, it is commonly the focus of ‘the expectation and celebration of fertility’ (1998: 97) as we have already seen in the discussion of Mbugwe concepts of beauty. But, female clothing also plays an important role in highlighting the social status of a woman and in linking her to her community. At the same time, it serves to differentiate her from other women in her own group (Barnes and Eicher, 1992: 1, Kloppe, 1995: 46).

The emphasis on socio-biological development discussed by Barnes and Eicher is also evident among the Maasai, where young women displayed their beauty to the *Morani* in public once they were regarded as ready to wear red clothes. In preparation for these displays, mothers helped their daughters present themselves as attractive to

these young warriors¹⁶ by clothing them in special dresses (*Engila*) and belts (*Enalijanga*) made from the skins of domestic animals, and decorated with beads of various colours, as well as beaded necklaces, hair ribbons and earrings similar to those once worn by their grandmothers to signify their social status and life accomplishments.¹⁷ Maasai girls who were judged as beautiful in these displays were rewarded through the respect they got from their families, and the opportunity to dance with the *Morani*. These *Morani*, who had the right to judge female beauty, punished girls whose performance was regarded as inadequate by beating them with sticks taken from plants known as *Chivi chivi*.¹⁸ Men thus played an active role in controlling women by defining and shaping concepts of female beauty among the Maasai. Ultimately, though, it was the Red and Black Gods that were believed to control these notions of beauty.

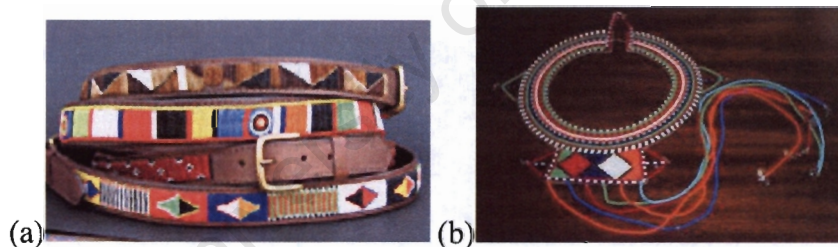


Fig: 22: (a) Maasai belts in a modified form, and (b) a 6-string Maasai ceremonial necklace (*Esosi/Ernorkine*). Source: www.biashara.biz/cat_maasai_jewelry.cfm.

¹⁶ See, also, Eicher (1995: 39) who points out that the occasion of marriage is a forum for people to display their best clothing. Failure to dress well always suggest laziness; indication of sartorial slovenliness and is often seen as insulting.

¹⁷ See, also, http://www.uvi.edu/pub_relations/uvision/_private/maasai.htm. Renne suggests that (1995: 120) this continued use of traditional clothing in ceremonies associated with preparing for marriage among certain African groups serves to convey 'a sense of moral superiority in contrast to outsiders who have failed to maintain their traditions'. This assertion is certainly relevant to a consideration of beauty displays among the Maasai.

¹⁸ Interview with Ngoisa Oile Neil Yang, Arusha, 12/10/2000. Also, Maglas, Arusha, 15/10/2000.

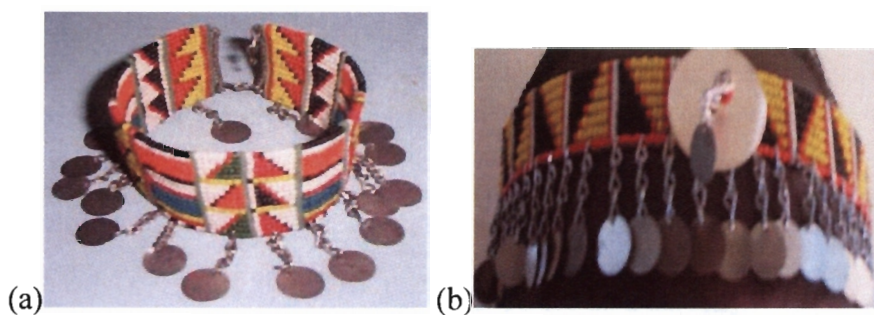


Fig: 23: (a) Maasai Bracelet (*Elijai*), and (b) a Maasai head decoration (*Sosiot*). Source: www.biashara.biz/cat_maasai_cfm.

The important roles ascribed to the Red and Black Gods in transitions from childhood to adulthood, reflected in the colour of the clothing worn by girls and women at different stages in their lives, extended to the use and symbolism of cosmetics. These cosmetics and powders were obtained from natural sources that were considered to reflect the compatibility between the two Gods, tamed animals and the environment. The most popular of these cosmetics were the *E'lukaria* (red) or *E'sindi* (yellowish) soils discussed above. Mixed with cow fat, *E'lukaria* was applied to the skin and hair to protect people from both the sun and infection. But as in other contexts, the significance attached to these soils was more than functional for, not to do so could also cause serious social disruption. For this reason, those who failed to uphold and sustain social harmony through the use of these natural cosmetics were expelled from the protection of the Gods.¹⁹

Maasai women also wore different garments, hair styles, and ornaments to denote their social and cultural status depending on age, and adornment for beauty started very early on in a girl's life. Ear piercing was usually done before the girls underwent initiation, a practice that is still common to this day. Over a period of time, wads of rolled leaves (*Engulaleti/Engulale*) were pushed into the opening to stretch the hole.

¹⁹ Interview with Rev. Fr. Kitomari, Arusha, 8/10/2000 and 5/3/2001.

The lobes were then decorated with beaded strands, leather straps or metal earrings (*Emakaai/Emusindai*).²⁰



Fig: 24: Maasai women wearing traditional Maasai decorations. Source: www.danheller.com/images/Africa/Tanzania/Maasai/Slideshow/img10.html.

Depending on age, Maasai women also wore rings of different kinds and meanings. On graduating, initiates were presented with silver and copper rings known as *Engalulumu* and *Esae*, which they wore around their ankles so that everyone could see that they had been declared ready to take on the responsibility of motherhood, including bearing children, building houses and tending goats and sheep. A single silver or copper ring known as *Engovir* signified engagement. This ring was put on the girl by either her mother-in-law or her sister-in-law to be. To this day, married women also wear a golden or silver ring to signify motherhood, while women of all ages wore a bangle known as *Amarinai*, which was made from beads.²¹ Unlike other rings and bangles associated with particular stages in a woman's development, this bangle appears to have had no particular symbolic significance.

As in the past, Maasai women continue to remove all the hair on their heads. The only exception to this rule is infertile and breastfeeding women who leave their hair short,

²⁰ Interview with Naishiye and Nanginyi, Arusha, 16/10/200 and 20/10/2000.

²¹ Interview with El Moloimet and Mollel Laltaika, Arusha, 3/10/2000, 6/10/2000, 22/10/2000.

usually shaving their heads to reveal two lines of hair running from the upper face, parallel to the ears. Likewise, women who are unable to become pregnant grow their hair for a period of weeks or months, in the hope of becoming more fertile.²² As this suggests, like certain cosmetics, some physical attributes are ascribed magical properties in sustaining concepts and values associated with notions of beauty.



Fig: 25: Breast feeding Maasai women.

Source: www.danheller.com/images/Africa/Tanzania/Maasai/Slideshow/img10.html.

The social and cultural functions of beads, already mentioned in relation to initiation ceremonies, were also associated with different stages of life. Thus, for example, only unmarried girls, *Ndito* could wear beads around their waist, as an indication of virginity.²³ These white beads were removed by the girl's sister-in-law after she had undergone initiation and a marriage proposal had been made. Removing the beads signified that the girls could become sexually active. Older women, including married women, wore large - wide beads known as *Esosin* around their necks to signify maturity, confidence, the ability to carry heavy responsibilities, stability and social and cultural resourcefulness.²⁴ There were also threaded white beads worn around the neck or the wrist, for ritual purposes. Here, white was used to indicate purity and

²² Interview with Sion, Arusha, 2/10/ 2000 and 3/10/2000.

²³ See, also, the function of *ucu* beads among Zulu-speaking communities. See <http://www.minotaur.marques.co.za/clients/zulu>.

²⁴ This type of beads *amaqanda* (eggs), symbolized fertility among the Zulu and thus were worn only by women who had had children. See, also, <http://www.minotaur.marques.co.za/clients/zulu>.

spirituality rather than virginity. Mothers wore these white beads when shaving their sons' heads in a ceremony that marked their maturity and thus their right to become elders in their society.²⁵

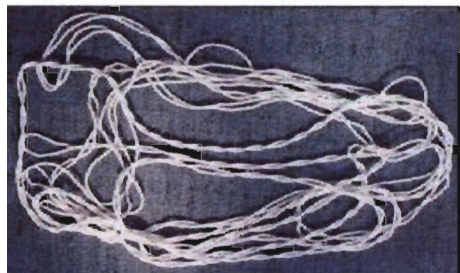


Fig: 26:²⁶ Threaded white beads. Source: www.minotaur.marques.co.za/clients/zulu.

In Tanzania, these traditionalist practices were severely challenged through the influx into the Arusha area of white settler communities in search of fertile land. Arusha is a well-watered, cool and usually fertile region. Due to its geographical and ecological diversity, it can sustain a number of activities simultaneously, including pastoralism, ranching, agriculture, hunting, woodcutting, mining, conservation and tourism. It was for this reason, that it attracted large numbers of investors and labourers during the colonial period, thus placing massive pressure on local resources.

The Maasai were ill-prepared for the arrival of German and British colonists, who coveted their best pastures in the highlands areas. According to Sir Charles Eliot, writing in 1903:

I cannot admit that wandering tribes have a right to keep other and superior races out of large tracts merely because they have acquired the habit of straggling over far more land than they can utilise.²⁷

As Monod (1975:46) has noted in response to statements like these:

²⁵ See <http://www.bluegecko.org/kenya/tribes/maasai.eunoto.htm>. Also interview with Sion, Arusha, 2/10/2000 and 3/10/2000.

²⁶ Beads of similar type and function are found among Zulu-speaking communities.

²⁷ See <http://www.great-adventures.com/destinations/tanzania/maasai.html>.

Historically it is hardly possible to avoid the question of the consequences of administrative action in the colonial period, oriented towards the establishment of political domination based on force and when necessary on the physical liquidation of opponents.

Once colonial settlers moved into the Arusha area, the Maasai were repeatedly attacked and harassed. In 1889, for example, Karl Peters, one of the first agents of German colonialism to come into contact with the Maasai wrote:

I have tried to produce an impression on the Maasai by means of the forest fires, by Fiery Rockets, and even by total eclipse of the sun ..., but I have found out after all, that one thing that would make an impression on these wild sons of the steppe was a bullet from a repeater or a double barrellled rifle and then only when employed in emphatic relation to their own bodies (in Gower, 1948:64).

Spiritually anchored to the land of their ancestors, the Maasai resisted early attempts to place them in reserves, which limited their contact with other communities and prevented them from crossing the new borders defined by colonial governments. Under German rule, the Maasai of what is now Tanzania were restricted to an area south of the Moshi – Arusha – Dodoma road. During the First World War this restriction was relaxed, but after the War a new reserve was created by the British when they took over Tanganyika (now Tanzania) from the Germans. By 1928 (Luanda, 1986: 97-98), no Maasai was allowed to cross European farms (including large portions of unused land) without a permit. Some respondents interviewed for this thesis confirmed that:

European settlers owned land near Masaai grazing areas. They...shot dead several Maasai who happened to graze cattle near these whites' farms. There were no chances for discussion or negotiation between them. Cattle were killed too. There were incidences; the Maasai would be tied to a tractor pulled across bushes, all around the settlers' farms. It was claimed that they were teaching the Maasai a lesson.²⁸

²⁸ Interview with Moses Jamakwea, Arusha, 29/10/2000, 20/3/2001; Mama Michael, Arusha, 30/3/2001; Juma Laizer, Monduli, 11/10/2000, and 20/10/2000, and Sion, Monduli, 2/10/2000, 3/10/2000.

As well as losing land to settler farming, and for the creation of game reserves, the Maasai lost other valuable pastures such as the Ngorongoro forest, which comprised an important dry season grazing area. Iliffe (1973: 104-105) argues that colonial restrictions on land use affected the Maasai far more than many other indigenous groups because their mode of life depended entirely on raising stock.²⁹ Moreover, the British kept putting pressure on the Maasai to sell their cattle in an effort to support colonial economic interests. Colonial Taxation further depleted Maasai resources since the Maasai depended on selling their cattle to meet this demand. And throughout the colonial period the Maasai paid the highest Poll Tax in the country (Ndagala, 1982 :167).

Over time, livestock was also sold to obtain cash for the purchase of consumer goods. In 1949 (Ndagala, 1982: 167-168; Ndagala, 1996), the goods available in Maasai-land include maize flour, blankets, sugar, swords, aluminium cooking pots and beads. The trade in these goods was carefully regulated by the colonial administration, which approved the type, quality and quantity of all commodities.

Further pressure was placed on the Maasai through the growth of estate farming in and around Maasai-land, which created a growing demand for labour. The Maasai rejected and despised working on these farms in spite of the various forms of coercion that were used to recruit them (Luanda, 1986: 113-114).

Because the Maasai offered fierce resistance to these attempts to draw them into the colonial economy, the British tried to administer them through their own traditional institutions, relying on a ritual specialist (*Oloiboni*) to do so. In 1930, the headquarters

²⁹ See, also, Mpangala, G. P. (1992); Ndagala, D. K. (1998); Shivji, I. G. and Kapinga, W. B. (1998).

of the Maasai district was moved to Monduli, close to the residence of the *Oloiboni* at *Lashaine*. But failure to realize that the *Oloiboni* had no executive authority and that his prestige depended on his ability as a diviner, this attempt at Indirect Rule was never successful (Jacobs, 1965: 1; Fosbrooke, 1948: 50).

Religion was also used to subjugate the Maasai.³⁰ The first evangelical societies entered Maasailand in the 1920s (Simonson, 1955) but the Maasai actively resisted conversion to Christianity. Speaking in the mid-20th century about the difficulties they faced in trying to convert the Maasai, a Lutheran missionary had this to say:

Their tradition is moulded deeply into the pattern of thought and behaviour of each of them, and to bring something new, un-adapted to this pattern is only to ask for discouragement (Simonson, 1955: 54).

This resistance to Christianity stemmed from a fear of losing contact with the land that had been given to them by their Gods, who were regarded as the source of Maasai socio-economic power and identity.

Following the independence of Tanzania, efforts were made to improve and control pastoral production. In the process, the new government tried to interfere in a number of Maasai customs. For example, authorities in Arusha declared that the Maasai were not to cover themselves with blankets during the daytime, nobody was to wear cloth treated with red ochre (*E'lukaria*), women had to abandon leather garments³¹ since they could not be washed, and young men had to abandon their pigtails and the

³⁰ About Evangelisation of African societies, see, also, Falola, T. (2003: 5).

³¹ According to Eicher and Sumberg (1995: 303): The wearing of western dress was associated with a society moving from a state of 'primitivism' to one of 'civilization'. See, also, Kloppe, S. (1996: 59); Allman, J. (2004: 152-156). Gans, H. J. (1975: 3) notes: 'the struggles between diverse groups and aggregates over the allocation of resources and power are not limited to strictly economic and political issues, but also extend to cultural ones'.

treatment of their hair with red ochre (TNA DC/MON/A.2/3). Bus operators were directed not to accept passengers who did not comply with these regulations. In 1978, Maasai dance groups were even prevented from performing at a national festival in Arusha because they had decorated themselves with red soil (Ndagala, 1982: 69). Since this ban did not extend to other groups, who were allowed to dance in their traditional garb, the post-colonial government clearly regarded the Maasai as backward. According to Chapkis (1986: 69) the impact of interference of this kind is often considerable:

Making people look the way you want them to is an important part of the colonial (and post-colonial) process. By taking away a people's culture and pride in their appearance, you literally change the way they see themselves.

Although the government relaxed its attempts to regulate Maasai customs following nation-wide criticism, they then introduced the villagisation programme discussed in Chapter Two. Under 'Operation Arusha' Maasailand, hitherto weakly involved in the Ujamaa villagisation programmes, was forced to participate in this resettlement programme.³² The Maasai case, however, does not fall into any of the models for resettlement in rural areas, primarily because it failed to accommodate traditional Maasai rights over grazing land (Shivji and Kapinga, 1998). Other government policies and programmes such as the establishment of schools, dispensaries, watering points and veterinary centres also influenced the Maasai. By getting used to these services and wanting to live near them, the Maasai cattle keepers modified their nomadic tendencies to become relatively more permanently settled. Maasai fears that

³² It was at this time that the Government launched 'Operation Dress-Up', to mandate 'modern dress' for the Maasai. The official discourse surrounding this operation consistently decried Maasai dress and their body-care as 'unhygienic', 'uncivilized', and 'outdated', which the government saw as an affront to Tanzania's efforts towards 'modern development' (Ivasaka, 2004: 109). Government owned newspapers echoed this popular campaign: 'Walking around half naked and smearing oneself with mud and ghee' did not form 'part of the development plan' (Ivasaka, 2004: 109).

their land would be alienated and utilized for subsistence agriculture and large-scale farming by their non-Maasai neighbours did not materialise, however, largely because of their concerted efforts to resist this drive to resettle all rural communities.

In the post independence period political campaigns, conducted on the radio and at public meetings, also played a role in weakening the pastoral practices and values of this group. Needless to say, these changes had a significant impact on traditional concepts of beauty, which have undergone major shifts particularly in urban areas like Arusha, a region that was once under the control of the Maasai.³³

As we have already seen in Chapter Two, urbanization (Kimambo and Temu, 1997: 35-39) in Tanzania can be traced as far back as the pre-colonial period. These early centres were either market places or tariffs collection points. During the colonial period they were expanded into larger centres, while others were created in areas such as railway stations and major road junctions. In the Northern Province, urban centres like these included Arusha, Karatu, Mbulu and Babati. Arusha was located strategically, connecting the labour supply areas of what are now Mwanza, Tabora, Kigoma, Dodoma, Singida, Rwanda and Burundi with European farms in Arusha, Tanga, Kilimanjaro and Morogoro. Some of the labourers were sent as far field as Kenya.

The emergence of these semi-metropolitan bases brought together people from different cultural backgrounds, leading to the development of new life styles that went

³³ Dorman (2002) observes that the Maasai are facing what the Native Americans faced long ago, 'their land is being taken over by their government, they are not allowed to roam freely over the country side; much of their land has been taken and converted to wildlife preserves or commercial needs...Many younger Maasai are being influenced by Western schooling and are forgetting traditional ways'. See <http://www.authorsden.com/visit/viewarticle.asp?AuthorID=5240&id=5395>.

hand in hand with the gradual transformation of traditional socio-economic systems, and the shaping of new concepts of female beauty. Because at that time settlement patterns were racially structured, separate residential areas were created for Europeans, Asians, non-Tanzanians and Tanzanians. Women living in these areas had to struggle to earn a living, and in many cases were forced to adapt their notions of beauty to conform to new ideals consistent with the values created by labour markets in urban-based environments. In the process, women developed new ideas about beauty that were influenced by the emphasis on race and racial differences they encountered in urban labour markets like Arusha.

As early as the 1920's (Iliffe, 1973: 100), most young women from the countryside were employed as 'house girls'. In order to secure employment among European colonials, these women had to be not only young, but also unmarried, smart and attractive. Employment in this sector also depended on having a light complexion, which their European employers associated with cleanliness. Complexion was not a consideration in all contexts, however. For example, 'house girls' who were working for the East African Corporation (EAC) were supposed to be smart, quick, healthy, and conversant in English.³⁴ Likewise, Asian employers attached little if any importance to complexion. Instead, they favoured women who were willing to work tirelessly. To them, endurance and the ability to work hard seem to have mattered far more than the appearance of the women they employed.³⁵

Other girls were employed as barmaids. Notions of beauty favoured by employers in this sector varied considerably. In the top class bars and hotels like Arusha Hotel,

³⁴ Interviews with Mzee Walii Charema, Arusha, 5 and 6/10/2000, 2/3/2001; Mama Maria, Arusha, 19/8/2000; Mama Kadudu, Arusha, 18/8/2000, 1/3/2001; Mama Maeda, Arusha, 18/8/2000, 31/3/2001.

³⁵ Interview with Mama Maria, Arusha, 19/8/2000.

Safari and Kilimanjaro Villa, barmaids had to look and behave like modern cosmopolitan women; they had to be tall and slim and were usually between 15 and 30 years of age. They wore fashionable contemporary clothing, high-heel shoes, had beautifully styled long hair and spoke English. These barmaids were trained to smile, how to talk and walk, and how to balance a tray on their hands. They were also expected to speak softly. These qualities were all intended to attract expatriate, mainly European customers. In contrast to this, women employed as barmaids in local bars had to be mature, strong and healthy in order to handle heavy duties including cooking and the often-raucous behaviour of their customers. No restrictions were placed on what they wore or how they styled their hair, nor were they expected to go through any special training.³⁶

In Arusha a growing number of women were also employed as teachers and in the health and security sectors from the late 1940s onwards (Iliffe, 1973: 104-105). In schools, teachers had to dress in accordance with the decorum befitting their profession.³⁷ Similar codes were developed for women working in the nursing profession. They had to be neat and wear long dresses, their hair was trimmed short, and they were banned from wearing earrings, necklaces, bangles, rings, lipstick and body perfumes, all of which it was believed would interrupt with pupils' concentration. They were also expected to wear practical flat shoes. Sandals were not allowed; nor was intolerance to the pupils, for whom they were supposed to set an example.

³⁶ Interview with Moses Jamakwea, Arusha, 29/10/2000, 20/3/2001; Mama Michael, Arusha, 30/3/2001; Juma Laizer, Arusha, 11/10/2000, and 20/10/2000, and Sion, Arusha, 2/10/2000, 3/10/2000.

³⁷ See, also, Proctor, T. M. (2002: 127); Voight, R. (2000: 217-245).

It is worth pausing here to consider both why and how dress codes have been regulated in and beyond colonial contexts. As Kloppe (1995: 47) points out: '...uniforms and prescribed clothing ...brilliantly enhanced the imperial spectacle and the dominant power this represented'. In a similar vein, Eicher and Sumberg (1995: 303) note that: 'the uniform dress for African indigenous civil servants of colonial regimes was usually differentiated from the dress of the colonialists to make apparent the relative place of everyone in the administration'. Young (1992: 276) argues, likewise, that uniforms, in this case those worn by police women, play an important role in regulating deportment, and promote a very particular concept of appropriate behaviour in the workplace: 'all officers must clearly understand that the wearing of jewellery whilst on duty in uniform for decorative purposes is totally unnecessary and contrary to the principles of a disciplined service' (Young 1992: 278).³⁸

By the 1950s some women were employed at international banks such as the Standard, Barclays and Baroda banks, which all had branches in Arusha.³⁹ Some interviewees claim that these women were expected to have long, thin fingers suitable to the task of counting money.⁴⁰ Because they earned good salaries, they could afford items like wigs obtained from Nairobi. The sophisticated fashionableness of these bank employees obviously played a crucial role in promoting the cosmopolitan image of the banks they worked at. But it also encouraged competition between them and women who were employed by the East African Community (EAC), especially during the period from 1967 to 1977, when Arusha town was the headquarters of the EAC

³⁸ See, also, Joseph, N. (1986).

³⁹ Interview with Mama Maeda, Arusha, 18/8/2000, 31/3/2001; Mr. Ngahugha, Babati, 8/10/2001, 22/8/2000.

⁴⁰ Interview with (names withheld) Arusha, 18/8/2000, 31/3/2001; Babati, 8/10/2001, 22/8/2000.

and consequently also the centre of economic and cultural interaction between Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.

The presence of the EAC had a huge impact on local conceptions of female beauty, leading women who worked there to wear mini-skirts, which at that time was forbidden by the government of Tanzania. This transgressive social behaviour would obviously not have been possible in more traditional contexts where women had little if any economic independence and therefore lacked the capacity to challenge entrenched social values, gender relations and established notions of beauty. Citing traditionalist rigidity in Algeria, Chapkis (1986: 73) points out that ‘When women began wearing minis [they] were beaten in the streets by young very violent fundamentalists’. Although in Tanzania women were not subjected to this kind of violence, in most cases it was equally difficult for them to challenge regulations against skimpy clothing in the early post-colonial period.

The EAC had a Secretarial College that trained telephone operators and office secretaries. Only young, educated women who could speak English, French and Swahili were recruited. During the weekends, these women went to discos in prestigious and expensive places like Kilimanjaro Villa and Hotel Safari, in many cases emulating the behaviour of foreign women by using commercially available beauty items such as soap, perfume, and lipstick. They also bought products to treat their hair, wore hair extensions, artificial nails, eye lashes, high-heeled shoes, and gold and silver jewellery imported from Kenya and Uganda. This trend originally

emerged, very slowly, after the First World War, when Tanganyika, Uganda and Kenya, were all controlled by the British.⁴¹

Even though some of the products used by these women could be obtained cheaply in areas frequented by lower income people, the EAC women went to special shopping centres in *Uzunguni* area, where prices were comparatively high. From the late 1960s onwards, they further asserted their differences from other women by spending their annual holidays in Kenya and Uganda, where they and their families were exposed to new values and ideas. Over time, the new forms of social capital amassed by these women set them apart from other Tanzanian women. But women who lacked the economic means to maintain a similarly cosmopolitan lifestyle soon began to emulate and compete with these women, using various commercially manufactured cosmetics and locally made concoctions to do so.⁴²

These other women, who usually had comparatively low levels of education, were employed in beans sorting and coffee harvesting activities. Here, young and unmarried women were preferred because of the long working hours and short breaks which did not leave enough time for mothers needing to breast-feed their babies and attend to young ones or other family matters. These women had to have thin fingers for picking and sorting the beans, and were not employed if their eyesight was poor, or if they had any other physical or mental disabilities. No make-up or other body

⁴¹ Interview with Mama Baby and Mama Michael, Arusha, 1/10/2000, 11/3/2001, 26/3/2001.

⁴² Interview with Mzee Walii Charema, Arusha, 5 and 6/10/2000, 2/3/2001; Mama Maria, Arusha, 19/8/2000; Mama Kadudu, Arusha, 18/8/2000, 1/3/2001; Mama Maeda, Arusha, 18/8/2000, 31/3/2001.

decorations were allowed, which according to some interviewees, left these women feeling more like machines than cultural beings.⁴³

Because men were generally financially more powerful than women, marriage became a source of competition among women in Arusha town. In order to attract men and to sustain their marriages, women usually felt obliged to make themselves as attractive as possible. But they were also expected to take care of their families and engage in petty income-generating activities such as selling local beer and vending food in order to subsidize their families' income. These women therefore employed badly paid 'house girls' and 'house boys' to do all the housework, which freed them to spend more time beautifying themselves. To maintain their beauty, these women consequently depended on the exploitation of others, usually members of their extended families.⁴⁴

Morality played a crucial role in the assessment of the beauty of these recently urbanised married women. They had to be well mannered, polite, humble, loving, confident, independent and tolerant. Since gold was regarded as an indicator of the family's wealth and therefore of their social status, they also needed the necessary funds to decorate their bodies with ornaments such as gold earrings, rings, necklaces, nose-rings, and bracelets. Likewise, they required surplus cash to buy dresses from home-based tailors and seamstresses, who attracted customers by devising fashionable new designs. These tailors and seamstresses copied ideas from ready-made garments, but modified these existing cosmopolitan fashions to suit the needs of their customers. Their creativity and ability to make women feel comfortable, but at the same time

⁴³ Interview with Mzee Walii Charema, Arusha, 5 and 6/10/2000, 2/3/2001; Mama Maria, Arusha, 19/8/2000; Mama Kadudu, Arusha, 18/8/2000, 1/3/2001; Mama Maeda, Arusha, 18/8/2000, 31/3/2001.

⁴⁴ Interview with Mama Mwajabu, Arusha, 7/8/2000, 21/3/2001.

look both up-to-date and uniquely fashionable, has sustained their unchallenged participation in the Arusha beauty industry since the colonial period.⁴⁵

In towns like Arusha, the homes of married women became meeting places and centres devoted to dealing with issues of hair, skin, clothing and the moral values that sustained women's beauty. But these gatherings also afforded married, as well as unmarried women, opportunities to discuss other social and cultural concerns. When women became involved in the struggle for independence in Tanzania (Mainland/Tanganyika), they often used these meetings to discuss political issues. While on the one hand, women's beauty thus sustained various aspects of Arusha's urban economy, on the other hand, it contributed to the creation of new power relations between married women and both their husbands and servants.⁴⁶ As will become clear elsewhere in this chapter, however, these women depended in many cases on the support of tailors and seamstresses, who played an active role in facilitating their political activities in the lead – up to Tanzania's independence from colonial rule.

From the late 1940s onwards, the growth of commercial media such as radio stations and newspapers also had a significant impact on conceptions of women's beauty in Arusha, where people had access to the state run radio, established in 1951 as the Dar es Salaam Broadcasting Services, before it changed its name to the Tanganyika Broadcasting Corporation in 1954 (Moore, 1996).⁴⁷ Concurrently, people had access to newspapers like *Taifa Leo* and *Mambo Leo*. After 1960, there were also other

⁴⁵ Interview with Mzee Lewanga and Mama Mlay, Arusha, 30/10/2000, 14/3/2001. About movement of fashion, see Blumer, H. (2003: 125-126).

⁴⁶ Interview with Mama Kadudu, Arusha, 18/8/2000, 1/3/2001.

⁴⁷ See <http://members.tripod.com/donmoore/genbroad/tanzania.html>.

newspapers such as *Zuhra*, *Mwafrika*, *Starehe*, *Ngurumo*, *Baragumu*, *Jicho* (from Kenya), *Mfanyakazi* and *The Standard*. *The Nation*, published in Kenya, appeared later. Most of these newspapers, which were privately owned, were not particularly concerned with issues of women's beauty, but state owned newspapers like *Taifa Leo*, *Nchi Yetu*, *Mfanyakazi*, *Ngurumo* and *The Standard* played an important role in shaping women's perceptions of themselves. At that time, these newspapers were tasked to promote values of beauty regarded by the state as appropriate for traditional African women.⁴⁸ Nyerere played an active role in this process, promoting indigenous values as part of his efforts to Africanise Tanzania. According to him:

A country which lacks its own culture is no more than a collection of people without spirit which makes them a nation. Of all the crimes of colonialism there is none worse than the attempt to make us believe we had no indigenous culture of our own (Nyerere, 1967: 186; Moore, 1996).⁴⁹

Newspapers owned by the state were consequently furnished with a set of 'dos' and 'don'ts' regarding women's dresses, cosmetics and moral behaviour.⁵⁰ They never commented negatively on traditional make-up and body decorations, for example, henna and perfume made from natural materials, but skin lightening materials and artificial nails were discouraged (Ivaska, 2004: 104-108).⁵¹ The State Radio (RTD) also portrayed Tanzanian women's qualities of beauty through songs and poetry readings on radio programmes.⁵² These state owned media thus functioned like traditional institutions of initiation but in a modern and public context. As will

⁴⁸ Interview with John Kitime, Laurence Hinju and Jackson Kalikumtima, Dar es Salaam, 6/4/2001, 20/4/2001, 27/7/2002, 5/8/2002.

⁴⁹ Moore 1996, in <http://www.swl.net/patepluma/genbroad/tanzania.html>.

⁵⁰ According to Ivaska (2004: 109-110) in these newspapers women in miniskirts were often described as 'Roaming half-naked', 'buttocks showing', 'thighs exposed'.

⁵¹ See, also, Hansen, K. T. (2004: 166-185); Ruane, C. (2002: 49).

⁵² The programmes included *Tumbuizo Asilia*, *Zilipendwa*, and *Malenga Wetu*.

become clear below, their efforts to influence women were supported by people involved in the independence movement that became increasingly active at this time.

In contrast to state owned newspapers, which commented on, and tried to influence concepts of female beauty, privately owned newspapers shaped perceptions of female beauty through the advertisements that appeared in them. In one edition of the *Starehe* newspaper, beautiful women were portrayed as those who used 'Hazeline Snow':

*Kwa ngozi yenye nuru zaidi, ya kupendeza zaidi, Hazeline snow inayotuliza, inayoburudisha, inayotakasa. Kila msichana anajua namna ya kuiweka ngozi yake ionekane ya ujana na inayomukia vizuri. Wanawake wengi hufaulu hivyo kuwa kutumia Hazeline Snow kila siku baada ya kunyoa. Jiweke salama, kijana na mwenye kupendeza kuwa Hazeline Snow. Jisikie upya na kunukia vizuri kwa sabuni ikaayo s-a-a-ana.*⁵³

Literally translated, this advertisement claims that a clean, healthy and attractive skin depends on using Hazeline Snow, which soothes, comforts and cleanses. Every girl knows how to keep her skin looking young, nourished and sweet smelling. Many women succeed socially and economically by using Hazeline Snow everyday. The advertisement also claimed that Hazeline Snow rejuvenates women and keeps them young.⁵⁴ Advertisement like these established culturally accepted values that promised not only the means to achieve beauty, but also introduced the idea that beauty is equated with youth.

Advertisements for skin lighteners were also very common. These advertisements often implied that it was only by changing their physical appearance that a person of African descent could gain cultural mobility and acceptance in a modern, hybrid society. 'Black' skin marked women as old, dirty, outdated, insecure and lacking

⁵³ *Starehe* (August 13, 1960).

⁵⁴ See, also, Chakis (1986: 96).

mobility. The art embodied in the language of advertisement of this kind played a powerful role in creating common patterns of consumption and a desire for upward social mobility.



Fig: 27: An advertisement that appeared in a newspaper in 1960.

Despite the massive impact advertising had on the commoditisation of notions of beauty in Arusha, as elsewhere in Tanzania, the struggle for independence in the mid-to late 1950s encouraged a renewed interest in more traditional, pre-colonial perceptions of beauty. This struggle highlighted the country's desire to regain a sense of pride in its African identity, which was partly informed by the idea of 'black pride', an idea that had first come to the fore in the African Diaspora through the efforts of leaders like Marcus Garvey in the 1920s (Oliver and Anthony, 1972: 224). These sentiments are evidenced in a speech given by a female political leader, Bibi Titi, who wanted to mobilize and educate other women on the cultural potential for reaffirming indigenous values after independence:

.... Foreign culture will not benefit us now. What we need is to polish our own (Tanzania) culture... West African women wear their African clothes proudly, and similarly women in India, but after the opening ceremony of the seminar, the East African women were all in Western

dress but we would like occasionally to have Westerners copy us (Geiger, 1998: 16).⁵⁵



Fig: 28: ⁵⁶ A Nigerian woman wearing head wraps in different styles.

During the independence struggles, hair styles like *Kilimanjaro*, *Umoja*, *Mwiba wa samaki* and *Twende Kilioni* were used as symbols of unity, and in the course of the 1960s, the *Afro* was adopted in recognition of the pride African Americans had begun to express in their African heritage.⁵⁷ The style called *Kilimanjaro*, in reference to the highest mountain in Africa, signalled the pride Tanzanians felt in their natural heritage, and marked their zeal to reach new political heights. Women who wore this style tied their plaited hair above their heads. *Umoja* literally meant enhancing unity and solidarity among Africans, while *Mwiba wa Samaki*, or fish-bone, was a more symbolic reference to the power, determination and appropriate strategies employed by progressive women, supporting independence, who pricked and hurt their conservative enemy without ever missing their target. *Twende kilioni*, meaning, 'let us go for mourning' was a cryptic term women activists used to organize political

⁵⁵ See, also, Moorman, M. (2004: 84-103). Falola, T. (2003: 49) noted: 'No state, not even an infant one, is willing to appear before the world as a bare political frame. Each would be clothed in a cultural garb symbolic of its aims and ideal being'. Also Levine, L. W. (1997).

⁵⁶ See <http://www.motherlandnigeria.com/attire.html>. See, also, http://www.nalis.gov.tt/Biography/BIO_MARY-EKWUE_queen-of-head-wraps.htm.

⁵⁷ See, also, Blumer, H. (2003) about: 'Fashion Movements'.

who allowed their homes to be used for political gatherings sewed these *Vitenge*, which often included words that conveyed messages of solidarity, identity, belongingness and unity towards a common goal. These seamstresses helped female political activists by guarding and scouting, because they worked on the verandas outside their homes and could therefore easily detect any threat to these meetings from the police. Similarly, they collected information from people pretending to be their customers, thus making it difficult for the colonial police to trace political activists.⁶²



Fig: 30: Women dressed in *Vitenge* during a Women's Day political rally, Dar es Salaam, 2004. Photograph: Edward Sylverster Mombo.



Fig: 31: A seamstress at work sandwiched between her customers. Photograph: Jasson Begashe, District Cultural Officer, Babati (2003).

⁶² Interview with Mama Soka and Mama Maria, Arusha, 19/8/2000.

Already in the 1950s political leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana, and others from Nigeria and Ethiopia visited Tanzania, thus pushing the agenda for political transformation beyond national boundaries.⁶³ Later, in the flush of independence in the 1960s, these African leaders ‘such as Nkrumah in Ghana and Azikiwe in Nigeria reinforced the newly won political sovereignty of their countries by appearing at the United Nations in the attire of their indigenous culture’ (Eicher and Sumberg, 1995: 298). Klopper points out, likewise, that (1995: 46) indigenous fashion was ‘...one of the most ubiquitous symbols of black opposition to white dress codes [after] the emergence of Africa’s independence movements in the mid-twentieth century...’.⁶⁴

It was also at this time that the popular ‘popcorn’ music of America began to surface.⁶⁵ The famous ‘Say it loud I am black and proud’ captured the minds of many Tanzanians, especially in urban areas.⁶⁶ ‘Rise-on’ style shoes had a similar impact. With heels of between three to six inches, these shoes increased one’s height, thus contributing to a sense of personal power. Although it may have seemed at the time that musical forms and items like these were adopted at random, they had far-reaching consequences for the gradual emergence of a common African identity and the growth of the Black Pride movement.⁶⁷

⁶³ See ‘Africa the Homeland: Diasporic cultures’, in Falola, T. (2003: 274-305).

⁶⁴ See, also, Renne, E. P. (2004: 125-142).

⁶⁵ According to Griebel, H. B. (1995: 223) During the black civil rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s, communities of African-Americans began assertively to define themselves in relation to their West African past. This had spill-over effects to other parts of Africa, which were waging struggles of independence, for example Tanzania.

⁶⁶ Interview with John Kitime, Dar es Salaam, 3/6/2002, 4/6/2002; Laurence Hinju and Jackson Kalikumtima, Dar es Salaam, 6/4/2001, 20/4/2001, 27/7/2002, 5/8/2002.

⁶⁷ Interview with John Kitime, Dar es Salaam, 3/6/2002, 4/6/2002; Laurence Hinju and Jackson Kalikumtima, Dar es Salaam, 6/4/2001, 20/4/2001, 27/7/2002, 5/8/2002.

While this struggle for independence was gaining pace, Arusha town consolidated its position as a centre for tourists who influenced notions of women's beauty in two totally contradictory ways. For while, on the one hand, tourism encouraged women to surrender traditional concepts of beauty, on the other hand, it helped to promote pre-colonial beauty materials and values, mainly because these tourists bought beauty items from local women. Many of these short-term visitors responded to the hot weather they encountered in Tanzania by putting on skimpy clothes, which young women from Arusha soon began to imitate. However, they themselves were also attracted to traditional women's dressing styles such as *Lubega*, *Vitenge* and *khangas*⁶⁸ and often took photographs of Africans wearing clothing of this kind, for which they usually paid.⁶⁹

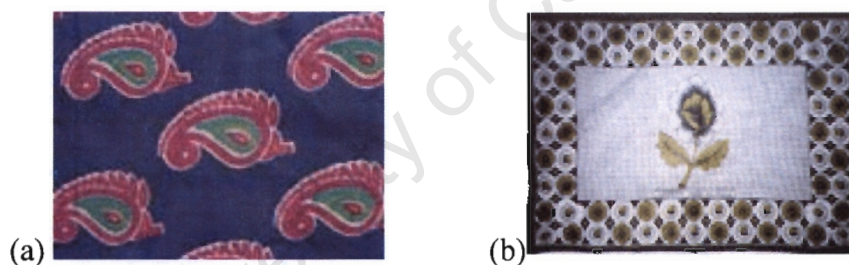


Fig: 32: (a) A *Kitenge* and (b) A *Khanga*. Source: www.sunflag-tz.com/pages/fabrics.html.

Curio shops selling items such as belts, necklaces, bracelets, rings, hair bands and handbags made of, and decorated with, beads also became popular among tourists. There were many of these shops along the road between Arusha town and different national parks in the area. Interestingly, though, it was primarily the items of beauty associated with the Maasai that were sold to tourists at these curio centres. The

⁶⁸ *Khanga* is a rectangle of pure cotton cloth with borders all around it and printed in bold designs and bright colours. See <http://www.deproverbio.com/DPjournal/DP,6,1,00/HEALEY/KHANGA.html>.

⁶⁹ The Maasai are well-known around the world. Photographs of the Maasai are frequently at the centre of tourist guidebooks as well as documentary films about East Africa and its wildlife. See <http://www.virtualcentre.org/en/enl/vol2n1/maasai.htm>. See, also, URT, Natural Resources and Tourism (1998).

Maasai, previously considered as backwards, primitive and a hindrance to Tanzania's efforts towards social and cultural modernity, thus became a cultural resource for financial gain and national pride. As Shiva Naipaul (1973: 320) points out, 'the Maasai – a condensation of the dark heart of Africa – have consistently aroused the admiration of Europeans'. This is partly because: 'the Maasai have largely managed to stay out of the mainstream and maintain their traditional cultural ways, although this becomes more challenging each year'.⁷⁰

Despite the State's efforts to suppress them, traditional Maasai materials thus began to move in an unrestricted way soon after independence, ultimately entering highly cosmopolitan areas like Dar es Salaam,⁷¹ which will be discussed in the next chapter.



Fig: 33: Maasai women making and selling ornaments made of beads at Modori, near Tarangire National Park. (see, also, Bedford, et al. 1993). Photograph: Jasson Begashe, District Cultural Officer, Babati (2004).

⁷⁰ See <http://www.africanheart.com/information/maasai.htm>. See, also Hodgson, D. L. (2005).

⁷¹ See http://www.globalvolunteers.org/1main/tanzania/tanzania_info.htm. Almost within all of big cities, the Maasai have continued to practice their ancient rituals and ceremonies.

CHAPTER FIVE

“IN THE HUB OF *MKOROGO*”¹, COMMODIFICATION AND THE REINVENTION OF FEMALE IDENTITIES IN COSMOPOLITAN DAR ES SALAAM

In this chapter the Swahili word *mkorogo* is used, not in the traditional sense of alluding to a concoction of various cosmetics, but rather as the blending of different and unrelated cultural resources, such as people, moral values and materials for beauty in a globalizing environment where it has become almost impossible to define the boundaries between these different resources. As I argue here, one consequence of this hybridisation has been the transformation of traditional cultures from an exclusively national resource to an international commodity. This will become evident in my consideration of the migration of Maasai communities from rural areas to the cosmopolitan set-up in Dar es Salaam, where people are actively adopting Maasai beauty products, thus adding to the consolidation of the *mkorogo* phenomenon. In addressing this phenomenon I will look at a variety of issues, such as the trade vessel *Meli ya fundi*, the social and economic situation in Dar es Salaam, especially in the mid- to late 20th century, the Tanzanian government’s interventions in the beauty industry, the commodification of beauty in educational institutions, the role of media in promoting particular concepts of beauty and the revival of pre-colonial concepts of beauty.

¹ *Mkorogo* stems from a Swahili word, *koroga*, meaning to stir. Literally, *mkorogo* is a mixture of different items of beauty stirred together. This mixture is mostly used by low-income women who cannot afford to buy more expensive products.

The commodification of concepts of female beauty can be traced back to the late 19th century, when Dar es Salaam first became a thriving cosmopolitan centre. Initially, Dar es Salaam was populated by the local Zaramo people, but as early as the 6th century, Arab traders moved down the east coast of Africa and in some cases settled in large urban centres close to the coast. Much later, European settlers from Germany and Britain, and Tanzanians of different ethnic origin moved to the city. During the colonial period Dar es Salaam was present-day Tanzania's capital city, but after 1973 a decision was made to transfer the capital further inland to Dodoma.²

Dar es Salaam's historic importance as an urban centre can be attributed in part to the fact that it had a large port that played a very important role in the import and export industries, including the trade in items of beauty. In contrast to other urban centres, it benefited for a long time from substantial state investment, leading to the development of infrastructures like roads and other communication network systems, and the establishment of government departments. It was this that encouraged the influx to the city of people from rural Tanzania, especially after the mid-20th century.

Prior to World War II, the African population in Dar es Salaam grew very slowly. There were 19,000 Africans in the city in 1913, but by 1948 there were 69,200. Ivaska (2004: 106) points out: 'Dar es Salaam's population nearly quadrupled between 1947 and 1967'.³

In recent decades, over one third of all urban-based Tanzanians lived in Dar es Salaam, working in both the formal and informal economies (Ivaska, 2004: 106-108). As will become clear below, contemporary beauty industries cut across these different

² The political decision to transfer the capital to Dodoma was reached because of this town's comparatively central location, and therefore its accessibility to Tanzanians from different parts of the country. Tanzania's National Assembly moved to Dodoma in February, 1996, but many other government offices have remained in Dar es Salaam. See <http://www.answers.com/topic/dodoma>.

³ See, also, Carr-Sunders, A. M. (1936); Zeleza, T. (1993).

economies, linking producers and consumers in interesting and often unexpected ways.

Table: 1: Total Urban Population of Tanzania and Dar es Salaam City.

Year	Total Urban Population	Population of Dar es Salaam	%
1948	197,300	69,200	25.8
1957	364,100	128,742	35.4
1967	685,092	272,821	39.8
1978	2,257,921	769,445	34.1
1988	4,755,000	1,623,238	36.5
1989	4,755,000	1,741,943	36.6
1991	5,636,396	2,052,300	36.4
1992	6,245,126	2,253,425	36.0
1993	6,919,599	2,474,260	35.0

Source: Figures from the Population Census 1998.⁴

The arrival twice a year in Dar es Salaam of a trade vessel nicknamed *Meli ya fundi* from about 1890 to the early 1960s⁵ had a profound impact on local concepts of beauty in early 20th century. This ship brought mainly *khanga* from Asia at a time when these decorated cloths were not yet manufactured in Tanzania. The Friendship, Mwanza, Musoma, Sun-flag, and Kilimanjaro ‘textiles companies’, to name just a few, were only established after independence in 1961.⁶ Soon thereafter, following the Arusha Declaration of 1967, an attempt was made to ban the purchase of imported

⁴ See, also, URT. (2003) ‘2002 Population and Housing Census: General Report’.

⁵ Interview with Shani Kitogo and Mama Mtu-mzima, Dar es Salaam, 19/4/2001, 14/6/2002, 25/6/2002, 4/8/2002, 28/7/2002, and 17/8/2002.

⁶ The Friendship Textile Mill (Urafiki) was established in 1968, Mwanza Textiles (MWATEX) in 1968, Musoma Textiles (MUTEX) in 1980, Sun-flag Textiles in 1976, and Kilimanjaro Textiles (KILTEX) was established in 1967. See http://www.intracen.org/worldtradent/docs/whatsnew/atc_lesotho-november2002/country-paper-tanzaniafinal.pdf.

cloth.⁷ But both before and after this Declaration imported cloth was highly valued in this coastal community.



Fig: 34: A guinea fowl.⁸

Originally, trade vessels from the east relied on seasonal winds. Although *Meli ya Fundi* was a steam ship, it also sailed seasonally across the Indian Ocean and therefore continued to be associated with the Monsoon winds by the women who anxiously awaited its arrival. Like the winds, the beauty products brought by this ship swept into almost every African home in the city, thus contributing to women's sense of pride in achieving a modern and increasingly cosmopolitan identity.⁹ According to respondents, competition for the imported cloth brought by this ship was fierce. Women therefore had to take whatever was available before the ship disappeared for a further five months, after which they could get more cloth. But these cloths usually had designs that differed totally from those brought on previous journeys.

⁷ The Arusha Declaration aimed, among other things, to protect the market for newly established local industries unable to compete with imported cloth that was considered by many Tanzanian customers to be both more attractive and superior.

⁸ The word *khanga* was derived from the guinea fowl, which in Swahili is called *Kanga*. This term was chosen partly because this type of cloth has designs similar to markings found on guinea fowls, partly because the words on *khanga* carry messages that are as loud as the noise made by these birds. See, also, http://www.swahilicoast.com/kanga_-_a_medium_of_communication.htm.

⁹ See, also, Fair, L. (2004: 13-24).

Although the choice available to these women was consequently limited, they asserted their control over this process by naming the cloths.¹⁰ To cite one example, *Meli ya Fundi ya Bamvua ya kwanza mwaka jana*, literally refers to a consignment brought during the first high tide the year before. Other names included allusions to the women's immediate environment, such as plants, and the activities they performed in their daily lives. For example, *mpunga wa kichele* alluded to rice, while in another case, *jicho la bwana*, the reference was to the eyes of a woman's husband. Other cloths were named to invoke the idea of love, not only for one's husband, but also for one's children. Roland Karashian, former director of a *khanga* manufacturing enterprise in South Africa notes, likewise, that the animals designs on these *khanga* have been ascribed specific meanings by their users. For example, cloths with fish motifs are given to pregnant women, a rooster is given to someone who talks a lot, the guinea fowl motif is said to bring rain, and stripes, when incorporated into a design, is often associated with nobility or status.¹¹



Fig: 35: Women wearing *khanga*. Photograph on the left by Edward Sylvester Mombo, Dar es Salaam (2000). Photograph on the right from www.watatu.se/swahili/Kuhusu%20kanga.htm.

¹⁰ See, also, <http://www.inst.at/studies/collab/breidenb.htm>.

¹¹ See <http://www.globalvolunteers.org/1main/tanzania/tanzaniapeople.htm>.

The beauty items brought by the trade ship also included skirts, blouses, shoes, beads, ornaments, cosmetics, perfumes and, later, handbags. Retailers, mostly street vendors but also owners of small shops, bought these items wholesale from the vessel before selling their goods to individual consumers, mostly women. The street vendors were like mobile shops walking around with items displayed on their shoulders, heads and arms. Initially, most were descendants of Arab traders who had difficulty in pronouncing Swahili words like *nguo*, meaning cloth or garment. But because they called out *guo guo*, a poor pronunciation of this Swahili word, these street vendors were always noticed wherever they went.¹² Famously known as *guo guo*, the descendants of these street vendors now tend to run small businesses in downtown Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. Their modern counterparts, who are young Tanzanians, are called *machingas*. Originally, these Tanzanian youths came from Uchinga in southern Tanzania,¹³ but today young men from other rural areas also sell goods on the streets, not only in Dar es Salaam, but also in other urban centres.¹⁴

Throughout the early 20th century, the *guo guo* played a major role in Dar es Salaam's beauty industry. They carried their wares from door to door, thus saving women the time and effort to go shopping. Based in the relaxed comfort of their homes, women could therefore crosscheck their choice of beauty items by consulting close relatives, friends and neighbours. Choosing a *khanga* was a major social activity, encompassing 'suggestibility, imitativeness, desire to conform, desire for companionship and fear of

¹² Interview with Bi Shukuru and Binti Zawadi, Dar es Salaam, 2/5/2001, 20/5/2001.

¹³ These street vendors are known as *machingas* because most of them originally came from the Machinga hills region of Lindi and Mtwara in southern Tanzania. According to Adam Lusekelo; 'They can easily walk 30 km a day!'. See, also, http://www.nationmedia.com/estafrican/08032004/Business/Business_Opinion080320040.html.

¹⁴ See Tripp, A. M. (1997).

social disapproval...Desire for the new progress, desire for economic and social prestige, and desire for...self-assertion' (Barr, 2003: 138). In this sense, they differed little from women in traditional rural societies, like the Mbugwe, where active engagement in, and validation of, the community served to transform every woman's search for beauty into a social transaction.

Paying the traders in instalments was actively encouraged. This increased the women's purchasing power, and allowed even those who could not afford instant payment to participate in this increasingly commodified beauty industry. Importantly, these extended payments, and the practice of exchanging items, also built a sense of trust between the women themselves, and between them and the retailers. Economic relations thus developed into social relations that were dependent on upholding values such as loyalty and honesty. In many cases, traders enjoyed the hospitality and trust, not only of the women themselves, but also their husbands. This trust was actively reinforced when these traders took the trouble to observe indigenous codes of respect.

Several beauty practices enhanced these borrower-lender relationships. For example, because ornaments such as earrings, bangles, rings and necklaces were regarded as attributes of wealth, they were regarded as indices of the women's potential or ability to pay their debts. Mostly made of gold, informants claim that their display on a woman's body served to convince the *guo guo* that she could be trusted. In some cases, these gold (and silver) ornaments were handed over temporarily either directly to the *guo guo* or to a neighbour or friend who had the necessary cash to secure a purchase.¹⁵

¹⁵ Interview with Mama Mtumzima and Shani Kitogo, Dar es Salaam, 19/4/2001, 17/8/2002.

In the case of married women, the quantity and quality of the ornaments they wore also came to be associated with the degree of love, care and responsiveness their husbands showed them. These men were therefore obliged to provide their wives with beauty materials of this kind. As Chapkis (1986: 79) observes: 'Traditionally, a woman dressed in money has been assumed to be making a statement not about herself but about a man. Her... clothing was thought to signal to the world that her husband or other provider was so wealthy he could afford it'. According to one Dar es Salaam interviewee: 'gold was as asset, it was instant money and provided the power to manipulate, and maintain certain standards of beauty'.¹⁶ These gold ornaments could also be given to a granddaughter by her grandmother or paternal aunt, as inheritance, to honour the memory of a grandmother or the paternal aunt who wore these items of beauty. In this way, inheritances helped to sustain the purchasing power of women while at the same time contributing to the transfer of patterns of consumption associated with particular ideals of women's beauty, from the very old to the very young.¹⁷

Like the possession of valuable ornaments, corpulence was also considered an essential attribute for these women. By being fat, they proved beyond doubt that they were secure, both socially and financially. Obese with several gold rings and necklaces were easily trusted by the *guo guo* and could therefore borrow as much as they needed from these retailers.¹⁸

¹⁶ Interview with Mama Mtumzima, Dar es Salaam, 19/4/2001, 14/6/2002, 4/8/2002, 17/8/2002.

¹⁷ See <http://www.globalvolunteers.org/1main/tanzania/tanzaniapeople.htm>.

¹⁸ As has already been pointed out elsewhere in this thesis, fatness is regarded as a sign of prosperity and success in non-market-oriented societies; here it is also commonly associated with maternity and the status and respectability of being a wife and mother (Chapkis, 1988: 38).

Because of the drive to acquire as many pairs of *khanga*, shoes, ornaments, perfume and cosmetics as they possibly could to increase their collection of items associated with the idea of beautifying themselves, many of these women were forced to seek new forms of employment in the expanding urban economy of Dar es Salaam. This helps to explain the involvement of women in small and petty trade activities from the early 20th century onwards. As Ivaska (2004: 107) points out, there was a range of opportunities for these women, like street hawking, working as small traders, beer brewing, and domestic employment. To this day, many women work as food vendors selling rice-bread, buns and liquor. Famously known as *Mama Ntilie*¹⁹, their emergence appears to have coincided with the arrival of *Meli ya Fundi*.



Fig: 36: A woman wearing ornaments made of gold. Photograph: Edward Sylvester Mombo, Dar es Salaam (2004).

As vendors, these women enhanced their sales by being clean, neat, well dressed and well decorated. In other words, attention to their appearance often played a significant role in the success of their stalls. In this way, notions of beauty thus began to extend beyond the private domain of the home to which women had traditionally been confined.²⁰ Working in open markets also afforded these women an opportunity to

¹⁹ Literally, mother serve me food. See, also, http://www.theexpress.com/express%20358/business/business_opinion.htm.

²⁰ See, also, Dunlap, K. (2003: 63-66).

crosscheck different *khanga* designs and other fashion items that might still be missing from their collection of clothes and accessories, like handbags and shoes. Some women claim that this made it easier for them to source particular items when the trading vessel arrived at the harbour, thus giving them a competitive edge over women who were financially less independent and socially less mobile.



Fig: 37: Two contemporary *Mama Ntilie*, i.e. ‘mothers serve me food’. Photographer: Ruben Ndimbo, Dar es Salaam (2003).

Although the Arusha Declaration of 1967 restricted imports, attractive *khanga* from India, China and Malaysia could still be obtained thereafter through Tanzanian traders of Indian descent. This cloth reached Dar es Salaam through the islands of Pemba and Unguja,²¹ where it was comparatively difficult to control the movements of trade vessels, which were often disguised as fishing vessels. Consequently, *Khanga*, including ones with Swahili words carrying all sorts of messages, kept flooding into local beauty shops. Women valued these imported *khanga* because, unlike local

²¹ In the late 19th century, *khanga* cloths became popular on the island of Zanzibar as a result of its long history of transoceanic trade. <http://www.tk-designs.com/clothing-in-africa-htm>.

khanga, they contained uncensored messages. These *khanga maneno*,²² literally *khanga* with words, were said to make the *khanga* more valuable. Through the messages on them, women asserted their personal feelings and sense of communal belonging. Many of these imported²³ *khanga* carried messages of condolence, appreciation, thanks, and the idea of reconciliation between different individuals, but others also expressed feelings associated with negative emotions such as anger and even fear.

While the transgression of restrictions on imports was widespread, the state and its agents nevertheless repeatedly tried to intervene in issues related to women's beauty, especially in the 1960s. Records show that during the 1965 conference of the UWT²⁴ (Union of the Tanzanian Women), conference delegates discussed at length the importance of national dress and how it should be worn, especially during celebrations and conferences, and concluded that short dresses, whether made of *khanga* or *kitenge*, (pl. *vitenge*), cloths decorated with images, should not be allowed. Delegates also agreed that dresses should not be tight. Garments like these were regarded as immodest and indicative of foreign influence, which was widely condemned at that stage. Some delegates even went so far as to call for a ban of aphorisms on *khanga* because of the abusive words sometimes used such as *mtaa wa pili mtanikoma*, which invoked the idea of aggression, and *sanamu ya michelini*,

²² Interview with Mkanula and Shani, Dar es Salaam, 4/5/2001, 15/7/2002, 28/7/2002; Examples of the words written on these *khanga* include, *Apendaye halipizi*, meaning, 'The one who loves does not take revenge'; *Bila jasho huishi*, meaning, 'You don't live without work'; *Baba wa Taifa Mwalimu J.K. Nyerere*, meaning, 'Father of the Nation Teacher J.K. Nyerere'; *Hakuna mlezi kama Mama*, meaning, 'There's no guardian like a Mother'; *Japo sipendezi kubembebeza siwezi*, meaning, 'Even though I am not beautiful, I won't be permissive', and, *Mpaji ni Mungu*, meaning, 'God is the Sustainer'.

²³ During the 1870s the textile industries in Manchester and Holland began manufacturing these garments, which were exported to Tanzania through Zanzibar. See <http://www.tk-designs.com/clothing-in-africa.htm>.

²⁴ Interview with Mama Kadudu, Mama Grace Soka, Mama Baby, Mama Mwajabu, Arusha, and Mama Tandau, Dar es Salaam, 18/8/2000, 19/8/2000, 11/3/2001, 21/3/2001, 8/7/2002.

which suggested a derogatory perception of women. The latter expression was inspired by the Michelin tyre trade mark.²⁵

At the end of this conference, the delegates voted to inform the Ministry of Commerce²⁶ of these declarations, and to call for the production of larger and heavier *khanga* that would preserve a woman's modesty.²⁷ They also suggested that female volunteers sent to work in Tanzania should follow particular dress codes: 'The biggest mistake volunteers make is wearing skirts that are too thin. Being able to see the outline of your legs...is very suggestive. So get prepared to wear something a little thick...And especially if you are wearing...cloth called a *khanga* ...make sure you wear two...or ... wear another skirt or shorts underneath'.²⁸ Ironically, these delegates nevertheless wore *khanga* at home similar to those they condemned in public, including ones with words expressing their feelings towards their husbands and peers.

While the gap between private and public dress thus took on a political dimension, this gap goes back a long way. Historically, some comparatively thin *khanga* that potentially compromised a woman's modesty, were reserved for the private domain, a practice that still survives to this day. When a man got married, he sent his bride a gift of *sanduku* meaning a suitcase, which contained the bride's attire, ranging from outer garments to delicate lingerie as well as gold ornaments (Swantz, 1995). However, the success of the *sanduku* depended above all on the number of pairs of *khanga* included

²⁵ This expression featured in the taarab songs performed by popular local musical groups such as Tanzania One Theatre (TOT), the East African Melody, and the Muungano Cultural Troupe. The taarab tradition is discussed in greater detail below.

²⁶ The Ministry of Commerce was responsible for setting trade regulations and standards for locally manufactured items as well as imported ones.

²⁷ During the rule of Zanzibar's first president, Sheikh Abeid Amani Karume, any tourist wearing a miniskirt was immediately ordered to buy a *khanga* wrapper on first setting foot on the island. See, also, <http://www.nationaudio.com/News/EastAfrican/271299>. See, also, http://www.tupo.org/messages/old_messages.php?.

²⁸ See <http://www.tupo.org>.

in it.²⁹ Many of these *khanga* contained messages with sexual allusions. According to Mtumwa Mzuri:³⁰

We used to wear *kangas* bearing red and black colour during menstruation...This made the husband aware that you were in the red and cannot give him any favours...White *kangas* were adorned during the full moon to symbolise the whiteness of the woman's heart towards her husband. Other bright coloured *kangas* were worn to match colourful waist beads of the woman to add to their attraction...(to indicate) a wife is in an expansive and compromising mood....An enticing sweet smelling kanga, acts as an aphrodisiac intensifying the intimacy and each other's need...A kanga with a message *karibu wangu muhibu*, meaning, welcome my darling, can boost a man's morale and make him feel like a king.



Fig: 38: Various *khanga* aphorisms. Photographs: Edward Sylvester Mombo, Dar es Salaam (2003).

In coastal regions and among women attending state functions some *khanga* were worn in public. In many cases, those chosen for official functions commemorated particular political personalities. To this day, these *khanga* designs incorporate photographic portraits of prominent figures and words carrying particular messages. The images and words found on these *khanga* have been used as a tool in emancipation and propaganda campaigns, and to indoctrinate and educate people. In

²⁹ See, also, Renne, (1995: 125) Among the Bunu, the thirteen marriage cloths carried in the marriage basket, were displayed in public. Similar displays of wedding gifts are also common among communities in South Africa.

³⁰ See http://www.swahilicoast.com/kangas_-_a_medium_of_communication.htm.

times of need, moreover, *khanga* may be pawned, since they form part of a woman's wealth.



Fig: 39: *Khanga* worn to mourn the late Julius Nyerere. Photographs: Edward Sylvester Mombo, Dar es Salaam (2003).

Other gaps emerged after independence, notably between the clothing worn by women holding political and high government posts and that worn by other women. Long dresses made of *vitenge* i.e. cloths without words, became more or less uniform among the former group. These modest garments came to symbolize the idea of power, perfect motherhood and nationalism.³¹

³¹ See, also, Proctor, T. M. (2002: 125-126).



Fig: 40: Women wearing long dresses made of *vitenge*. Photographs: Edward Sylvester Mombo, Dar es Salaam (2004).

Shoe styles³² varied depending on the activities these women were engaged in. During office hours comfortable flat, open shoes were preferred, but high heels and strong perfumes were common when attending state banquets, weddings and related social and cultural activities. As this suggests, women in prominent positions were caught between the need to uphold officially sanctioned images of ideal motherhood and a growing desire to adopt a more glamorous, cosmopolitan idea of female beauty (Nordic Africa Institute, 1998).

After independence, veils wrapped in various styles also became increasingly popular among female politicians, not only at work but when attending social gatherings as well. Except in the coastal regions and among Muslim women, the use of head wraps had until then been confined to the private domain, regardless of the social status of the wearer. The reason for the use of veils becoming public, initially among female politicians, is not entirely clear. Most respondents simply referred to this practice as

³² See <http://www.otal.umd.edu/~vg/amst205.F97/vj08/introduction.html>.

‘fashion’, but it is also possible that these veils were inspired by the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1952.³³



Fig: 41: Queen Elizabeth II wearing a crown. The crown she wore at her Coronation may have inspired the fashion of wearing ‘crown-like head-wraps.

The Queen’s birthday continued to be celebrated in Tanzania after independence and official photographs of her commonly showed her wearing a crown. Alternatively, this practice may have originated in West Africa,³⁴ which became closely linked to Tanzania during and after the struggle for independence. Either way, wrapped veils became associated with the idea of power and political authority. Like the ‘borrowed objects’ commonly found among other African communities, they were transformed into what Eicher and Erekosima (1995:161) call ‘indigenously meaningful and useful ones’.

³³ See http://www.tcmuseum.org/royal_events/queen_elizabeth_ii_coronation. See, also, <http://www.peterwestern.fq.co.uk/elizabeth.htm>. See, also, http://www.westminster_abbey.org/coronation/elizabeth_ii_coronation.htm.

³⁴ In Nigeria, the *Nelema* (Petty Princes) style was reserved for royalty and sometimes worn by young brides-to-be; the *Ogoni* (Strong Woman) style was for a woman who has achieved success in education, commerce or politics; and *Eko* Bridge, was a style for dinners, weddings and naming ceremonies. See, also, http://www.nalis.gov.tt/Biography/BIO_MARY-EKWUE-queen-of-head-wraps.htm.



Fig: 42: Women wearing head wraps of different styles. These photographs all date to 2003 or 2004.

From the mid-1980s onwards, female politicians began to adopt Euro-American clothing styles. This coincided with the government's liberalisation policies, which afforded new opportunities for diplomatic contact between women in Tanzania and elsewhere in the world. During this period various official associations and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were formed, many of which hosted meetings in a number of different countries. No matter how serious and committed women were to the issues discussed at these meetings, interviewees who participated in some of these meetings maintain that they also exchanged ideas regarding fashionable dress and other forms of appropriate adornment. Comments and questions such as 'you look cute'; 'you are wearing a very nice perfume'; 'where did you buy your handbag?'; 'the sunglasses are wonderful'; 'I have a similar necklace but it not as good as yours'; and 'your shoes are very convenient for busy modern women'³⁵ were apparently quite common in the informal discussions that followed these official meetings.

Since then, sales of imported ready-made suits, dresses, shoes, belts and handbags, have been on the rise, but because these global styles are incompatible with head wraps, the latter have rapidly given away to a host of new hairstyles. As one woman noted: 'There are thousands of beautiful hairstyles; more and more are emerging; it

³⁵ Interview with Swedi Mwinyi, Dar es Salaam, 16/4/2001, and Mama Rajabu, Dar es Salaam, 14/4/2001.

gets more and more difficult to choose between them; we are spoilt for choice'.³⁶ This development is paralleled in West Africa where, instead of necessarily wearing head wraps, women now resort to decorating their heads by embellishing their elaborate hairstyles with flowers, beads, shells, metal and feathers, and by shaving their hair close to the scalp in ornamental patterns, or by applying clay to their hair and sculpting it into various shapes (Griebel, 1995: 218).³⁷



Fig: 43: Different contemporary hairstyles.

Recent Tanzanian hairstyles imitate natural objects such as roses, tomatoes, calabashes, mushrooms, snails, snakes, anthills, finger millet, peacocks and finger fish. This remarkable range of styles can be ascribed to the fierce competition between different hair salons seeking to attract customers by offering innovative fashions. Chapkis (1986: 96) explains the economic imperative underlying developments like these as follows: 'Being a hairdresser, is being in the business of making people happy. People come into your salon to look better and to feel better...(salon) want to sell...happy people. Because, if you...can make them feel...excited and exciting, they are going to walk out with a smile and bring...more clients'. The contemporary fashions of female politicians thus combine international trends with locally invented forms. Not surprisingly these women have had a far-

³⁶ Interview with Sion Nnko, Dar es Salaam, 16/6/2001, 10/7/2002.

³⁷ See, also, 'Hairdos' in Bewaji, J. A. I. (2003: 130-131). Also Zdatny, S. (1999).

reaching impact on the wives and female relatives of male leaders, many of whom either travel abroad with their husbands, or meet foreign dignitaries at local banquets.

Gatherings like these local banquets play a crucial role in the dissemination of women's beauty materials, and are increasingly important in the adoption of a range of styles by the female relatives of male politicians. For example, it is now fairly common for Tanzania's female politicians to wear foreign dress in deference to their hosts, such as Asian clothing when attending social gatherings hosted by Asian dignitaries. These and other foreign fashions have consequently become popular among women working in other sectors. As Eicher and Sumberg (1995: 298) point out, a preparedness to be this flexible communicates a 'willingness and ability to operate in international corporate and political worlds'. As they also observe, the increasing tendency for women's wardrobes to 'contain both cosmopolitan and ethnic dress ensembles', allows them to 'communicate effectively with others and establish their desired image as any given situation demands' (Eicher and Sumberg, 1995: 305). In communities throughout the world, notions of styles and beauty have consequently become increasingly unstable and impermanent. In Tanzania itself, this development has been especially marked since the 1980s.

This impermanence and instability is also evident among the daughters of politically powerful families who are now often educated either abroad or at locally based international academies, where their identities are shaped by values that have little if anything in common with long-established indigenous notions of beauty. Today, these girls tend to equate the idea of beauty with a range of ever-changing practices that might include the wearing of tight trousers, tight mini skirts, short tops, backless

dressess, dreads, open shoes, multiple earrings, tattoos around their belly buttons, shoulders, and arms, and rings fitted to their eyebrows, noses, chins and lips. According to some of these young women, they are exercising their democratic rights through these patterns of consumption. In other words, they have come to associate the idea of freedom, not with the right to express their political views, but rather with the right to adopt and appropriate a range of styles and fashions. As will become clear below, these fashion statements are almost identical to those found among University students, most of whom soon develop similarly hybrid conceptions of what it means to be beautiful, even if they come from comparatively poor rural backgrounds.

Yet there is also an important distinction between these University students and the young daughters of politicians, for the parents of the latter group are still actively involved in the government's on-going attempts to intervene in female concepts of beauty. More often than not, the attitudes of these girls consequently conflict directly with the officially sanctioned conservative values and norms upheld by their mothers and fathers. As they all know from direct experience, it is still completely unacceptable for women to wear short dresses in parliament, at conferences and in public work places. Since, in spite of these role models, these comparatively wealthy, sophisticated young women have completely lost all interest in the notions of modesty upheld by their mothers and among traditionalist communities, they are obviously no longer committed to supporting the state's nationalist agenda (See, also, Eicher and Sumberg, 1995: 304). As this suggests, even though there is some evidence that the gap between internationally sanctioned and local concepts of beauty are narrowing in

some sectors of the Tanzanian beauty industry, there are still very significant differences in attitudes to fashion among different generations of women.³⁸

The mass media have also contributed to the gradual shift in cosmopolitan perceptions of beauty among women living in Dar es Salaam. In the mid 1970's, for example, popular songs like *mayasa*, *rangi ya chungwa*, 'VIP', and *mshenga*,³⁹ commented on and thus influenced women's attitudes to dress and adornment. These songs warned about the dangers of skin bleaching, improper feeding, corrosive hair-straightening detergents and the inappropriateness of copying alien beauty practices. They presented an image of the beautiful woman as someone with soft silky skin complexion, decorated with gold and silver ornaments, strings of beads around her waist, milk-white teeth, an energetic, giraffe-like neck and bangles around her wrists. By beautifying herself in this way, they suggested, married women protected their husbands from the stress induced by working hard. In contrast to this, women who had abandoned tradition in favour of modernity were portrayed as being unable to provide this kind of protection. Beautiful, traditionalist women were referred to in one song as 'VIPs', i.e. very important persons, because they upheld values that were endorsed by the Tanzanian government.

As will become clear below, this conservatism has given way to an increasingly cosmopolitan musical scene in which notions of beauty are influenced by the appearance of contemporary, internationally-acclaimed musicians whose values and ideas are gleaned from the popular media, including magazines, newspapers,

³⁸ See, also, Durham, D. (1995).

³⁹ *Mayasa* was composed by Marijan Rajab; *Rangi ya Chungwa*, by Tabora Jazz Band; 'VIP', by Vijana Jazz Band, and *Mshenga*, by Mbaraka Mwishehe Mwaruka of Morogoro Jazz Band, all of which were based locally in Tanzania.

television programmes and the Internet. Even so local genres, notably the *taarab* tradition, continue to exert a measure of influence among older, married women. In contrast to the shifting values reflected in contemporary popular musical genres, these *taarab* musicians wear high heels, colourfully decorated long dresses, apply lipstick, eye liner, and henna, and perfume their bodies with incense.

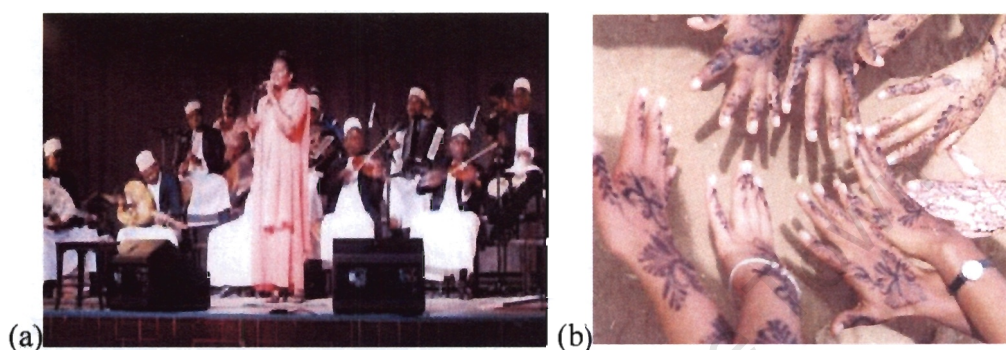


Fig: 44: (a) A *taarab* singer from www.zanzibarmusic.org/culture%20Musical%20Club.htm and (b) hands decorated with henna. Photograph: Rehema Nchimbi, Dar es Salaam (2000).

Although *taarab* is performed mainly by coastal people whose ways of dressing are connected to Tanzania's Islamic culture, *taarab* singers do not wear veils when they are on the stage.⁴⁰ The exposed heads of these *taarab* singers reveal various hairstyles, while their high heeled, open shoes allow them to display painted toes nails and, sometimes, long artificial nails. *Taarab* women constantly adapt and integrate the values of beauty associated with different 'worlds', including that Islamic world, that of wives seeking to please their husbands, and that of the modern music industry (see, also, Chapkis 1988:72). It is this ability to be flexible and to change that ensures the continued influence this tradition has on concepts of female beauty among especially older women who are ambivalent about embracing cosmopolitan forms of dress.

⁴⁰ According to El Guindi (1999: 59) 'She does not wear a...veil [but] she does wear distinctive garments that serves to identify her as a modest and respectable...woman'. See, also, Shiraz, F. (2001); McDonough, S. (2003); Akou, H. M. (2004: 56- 61).

In the pre-liberalisation era, when the local mass media were controlled by the state, it was still fairly easy to promote the preservation of already established Tanzanian cultural values. During this period, restrictions were placed on the importation and ownership of television stations and other audio-visual media such as movies because they were rightly considered very powerful in disseminating ideas about the international world of modern consumer capitalism. Radio stations played songs such as *Najivunia Uafrika*, literally, 'I feel proud of being African', and *Mayasa Uzuri ni wa kuzaliwa nao*, literally, 'Beauty is natural', i.e. one is born beautiful and therefore does not need to rely on cosmetics. According to Nyerere,⁴¹ these restrictions were not meant to deny the people of Tanzania an opportunity to interact with foreign cultures, because, to him, 'A nation which refuses to learn from foreign cultures is nothing but a nation of idiots and lunatics...But to learn from other cultures does not mean we should abandon our own'. Nyerere suggested that music and entertainment programmes should first and foremost contribute to preserving a Tanzanian culture and should avoid widening the gap between rich and poor. In the mid-1960s, parliament even debated a law to prohibit playing foreign music on the radio stations in Tanzania (Lange, 1997).⁴²

Following liberalisation, the doors were opened for the establishment of independent newspapers, billboards, books and magazines, Internet and access to new TV stations. Privately owned stations like CTN, DTV and ITV soon established a leading position in this industry. Similarly, privately owned radio stations, such as Radio Clouds, Radio East Africa, Radio One, Magic FM, Radio Free Africa and Kiss FM were

⁴¹ See <http://www.swl.net/patepluma/genbroad/tanzania.html>.

⁴² See, also, <http://www.newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/c>.

established.⁴³ It was also during this period that the government began to relax restrictions on the importation of foreign products, which allowed many businesses to invest in the global beauty industry, thus capturing a previously untapped market of eager female consumers who were keen to embrace, but largely ignorant about, the outside world.

The newly-established commercial TV stations accepted advertisements that promoted values of beauty upheld by glamorous international celebrities and advertisers abroad. As Chapkis (1986: 41) suggests, this development is consistent with the consolidation of a limited, upper class vision of beauty based on the idea that: 'to join the club you have got to look like this, smell like this, speak like this, and dress like this'. These advertisements have had a significant impact on the beauty practices of young women, some of whom now rely on various aids in an effort to qualify as models for them.⁴⁴ For example, Tanzania has experienced a burgeoning interest in physical exercise linked to the beauty industry, leading to the establishment of gym centres.

Likewise, so-called colleges of beauty have emerged, where young women are instructed on how to improve their appearance. One such college is the Dar es Salaam College of Hair Design, which is run by a woman who originally came from Kenya, and who grew up, studied, and worked in England on issues related to hair dressing. This college has not only adopted training manuals from both England and America,

⁴³ Even so, the Broadcasting Service Act of 1993 restricts private broadcasters to a maximum range of five of the country's 20 administrative regions. See, also, http://www.cominit.com/news/mediabeat/mb_b0030.html.

⁴⁴ See, also, Hesse-Biber, S. J. (1996).

but also runs 'the only salon specifically for young children', a clear reflection of the growing international trend to target very young consumer groups.⁴⁵

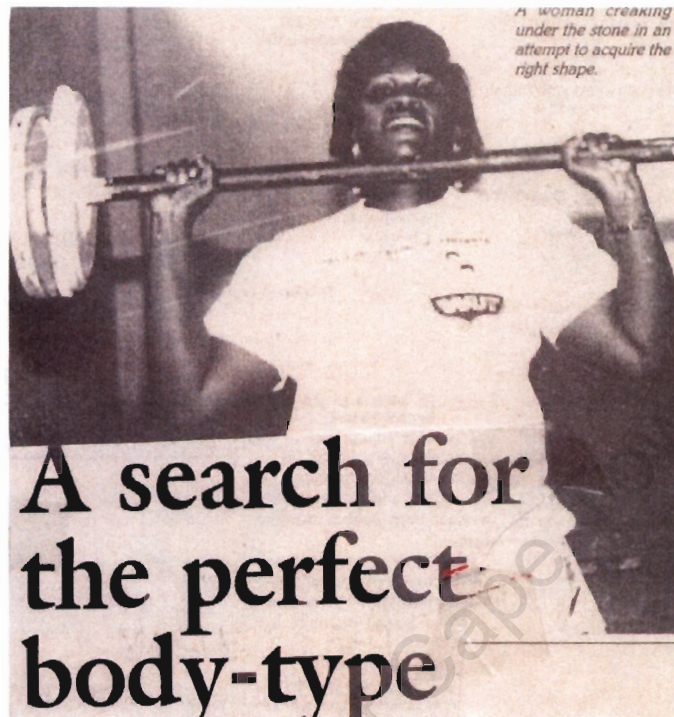


Fig: 45: A woman doing exercises at a gym⁴⁶ in Dar es Salaam.

A direct consequence of developments like these is the increasing tendency among Tanzanian women, both young and old, to emulate concepts of beauty portrayed in the local and international media. As a result, attributes that are repeatedly celebrated in advertisements such as skin bleaching and thinness have come to be regarded as progressive and ultimately superior to those formerly promoted by the state. As Bridgwood (1995: 39) notes, trends like these now tend to transcend age categories. For example, married women commonly dress like and use the same make-up as

⁴⁵ *Majira* (September 30, 2004).

⁴⁶ Other gym centers also in Dar es Salaam include Ladies Gym at Mbezi, Pentagon Gym at Chang'ombe, Red's Gym at Sinza, Msasani Fitness Centre, Kings Gym at Msasani, Bodyline Care at Oysterbay, Super-Fit Gym along UWT Road, the National Stadium Indoor Grounds at Temeke, and the Members Only Class at the Sheraton Hotel. See *The Sunday Observer*, June 29, 1997.

young girls, so much so, that it has become difficult to distinguish between them, ‘the wedding rings ...often provid(ing) the only cue’.

As mentioned in passing when discussing the *taarab* tradition, songs broadcast by privately owned radio and TV stations now promote modern notions of beauty based on the fashion performance styles of foreign celebrities such as Jennifer Lopez, Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears. Today, young women go so far as to call themselves Lopez or Britney, in some cases also emulating the body language of these glamorous performers. In many cases, though, it is through the example of local musicians that these styles are disseminated and popularised. Thus, for example, Judith Wambura, famously known as ‘Lady Jay Dee-the Commando’ who wears very short skirts, mini-tops and high-heels when performing her music, has become a model for secondary and primary school girls, who copy her notions of beauty.



Fig: 46: (a) Lady Jay Dee (2004) and (b) a male musician with plaited hair (2004).

Male artists, too, have been promoting these globally dominant values of women’s beauty. *Mwanafalsafa* in his song *Mabinti*, literally, ‘girls’ and Jay Mo in *Nataka Demu*, literally, ‘I need a girl’, mention such ideals as height, skin-tone, legs, walking

styles, lips, and the waist and hip size of women fit to be their girl friends. In some of their lyrics they actively endorse ideals that are now commonly upheld in contemporary beauty pageants, such as the phrase: ‘...*nataka demu awe na miguu kama ya Hoyce Temu, midomo kama Shose, mrefu kama Magese, kifua kama J Lo...*’. Literally translated these lyrics insist that, ‘...my girlfriend’s legs should resemble those of Hoyce Temu, Shose’s lips, Magese’s height and J Lo’s bodice’, a reference to some of the girls who in the recent past have won the Miss Tanzania beauty title.⁴⁷ These songs are featured, repeatedly, on a programme known as ‘Bongo *Flava*’ or music for the new generation that is also shown on Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda. Although their impact can obviously be attributed in large part to the power of the international media in upholding increasingly homogenous notions of beauty, in Tanzania itself, this impact can also be ascribed to the fact that people admire and respect local musicians who have become financially successful.

Interestingly, some of these male artists also plait their hair and wear earrings and necklaces similar to that worn by women, a trend that has upset especially older people. But Banana Zoro, a local male musician, commends this practice because, according to him, it ‘...is part of our history. Our grandfathers used to plait their hair and wear earrings, and they were accepted by their societies. We have modified some of the practices in order to fit-in a modern context. My fiancée, Jack who is a European loves me for this particular beauty practice’.⁴⁸ Other musicians, including Arafat Ghulam and Hard Guy, support these notions of beauty which, ironically, can

⁴⁷ Hoyce Temu won the Miss Tanzania title in 1999, Shose Senare, in 1996, Happiness Mageesse, in 2001, while J. Lo was a musician.

⁴⁸ See <http://www.ippmedia.com/33765>.

now be viewed as either transsexual or traditional, depending on one's perspective (or prejudice).⁴⁹

Despite these developments, the state owned Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam (RTD)⁵⁰ still upholds and advocates traditional Tanzanian cultural values. This radio station presents didactic programmes and songs, many of which try to convince the public to promote family values and the importance of motherhood, but it deliberately does not advertise cosmetics. Instead, it alerts people to the dangers of certain commodities such as the use of RICO toilet soap, which contains mercury that destroys fertility and that can cause serious eye problems. At the same time, however, the state owned television station (TVT) promotes modern values and materials for beauty through advertisements.⁵¹ The reasons for these contradictory positions can be ascribed partly to the fact that the TV station needs to advertise to remain financially solvent, but possibly also because it is afraid to lose viewers who associate these advertisements with glamorous sophistication.

These contemporary, anti-traditionalist values are further promoted by topping up the monthly salaries of female presenters, who get a special allowance to buy designer dresses, shoes and ornaments. The management of TVT has also employed a beauty specialist whose major responsibility is to beautify the women's faces through the application of cosmetics before they appear for broadcasting on TV. Recently, however, the management of TVT was forced by the state to demand that its female

⁴⁹ See, also, Grigg, C. (1998).

⁵⁰ RTD was first established in 1951 as an experimental station by the British. It became a state owned radio station after Tanganyika's independence in 1961. See, also, <http://www.swl.net/patepluma/genbroad/tanzania.html>.

⁵¹ It was officially launched in 2001, several years after the first private TV station went on air in 1994. See <http://www.newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/c>.

employees wear dresses made from locally manufactured cloths, i.e. *vitenge*, to promote the idea of a Tanzanian identity and cultural pride.⁵² This development confirms Eicher and Sumberg's (1995: 298) observation that: 'Sometimes ethnic dress is retained solely as display for ceremonial and ritual occasions'. In public, these presenters are thus forced to embrace two radically different notions of beauty, both of which are promoted by their employer – one looking back, the other looking forward.

Lower down the social scale, the beauty industry has thrived since the early 1980s through the importation of second hand clothes and other material famously known as *mitumba*⁵³, which lead to the widespread adoption of international standards of beauty following the introduction of the government's economic liberalisation programme. The more women bought these imported materials, the more they transformed their perceptions of beauty. Today, this second-hand trade includes not only dresses and skirts, but also belts, underwear, brassieres, shoes, hand bags, body sprays, shavers and dryers, which have become increasingly popular in both urban centres and rural communities. In urban areas like Dar es Salaam the spread of *mitumba* has been facilitated by waves of *machinga*, i.e. street vendors carrying these imported items through the city, thus affording women the opportunity to buy garments that are in many cases unique.

This desire to seem unique often increases competition for uncommon fashions and designs, leading on the one hand to the wearer's conviction that she forms part of a sophisticated international community of women. On the other, *mitumba* allows the

⁵² Interview with (names withheld) Dar es Salaam, 17/8/2003.

⁵³ *Majira* (January 01, 2004).

wearer to develop a more local feeling of belonging through the equality this consumption of second- hand fashion affords her.



Fig: 47: *Machingas* selling second hand clothes. Photograph on the left by Edward SylvesterMombo, Dar es Salaam (2004). Photograph on the right: www.ippmedia.com.

This idea of exclusivity is no more than an illusion (Haug, 1986) however, because, in practice, these women lack choice. The fashions they wear are all ready-made and ultimately conform to narrowly defined international fashion norms. Moreover, although imported items were reserved for women who belonged to Tanzania's political, intellectual and economic elites before the passing of legislation legalising *mitumba*, these *mitumba* have afforded other women opportunities for developing new ideas about beauty irrespective of social status and class. Even women with comparatively low earnings can participate in this common, increasingly cosmopolitan beauty market that challenges the national ideals upheld in earlier decades (See, also, Chapman 1995:11).

But the importance of the *mitumba* has also outraged large numbers of people who suggest that the government should screen these imports before they are allowed to enter local markets (See, also, Eicher and Sumberg, 1995: 304).⁵⁴ According to this conservative constituency, to do so would allow the setting up of appropriate beauty standards that are compatible with national cultural values.⁵⁵ The aims of this group are actively reinforced by the recent revival of indigenous styles and beauty practices that for a long time had been associated with the idea of backwardness. This new trend poses a challenge to contemporary notions of beauty and increases the complex issues surrounding conceptions of women's beauty in urban centres like Dar es Salaam.

Maasai clothing and hair styles, kitchen parties, wedding ceremonies and ethnic cultural ceremonies annually organised by the Department of National Antiquity,⁵⁶ are all indications of the capacity for these and other traditionalist practices to adapt and survive despite the impact of global beauty trends promoted by multi-national companies. This hybrid, commodified revival of pre-colonial forms and values highlights an increasingly fluid response to a variety of cultural stimuli. As one boutique owner in the city centre noted:⁵⁷ 'People, ideals and fashions move freely from one place to another', making it difficult to define clear differences between traditionalist and non-traditionalist cultural forms and practices.

⁵⁴ See, also, (*Majira*, January 01, 2004).

⁵⁵ In 2003, the Tanzania Board of Standards banned the importation of second hand underwear, brassieres, night wear, and socks following allegations that these imported items were causing flu and skin related diseases. See, also, <http://www.bcstimes.com/majira/viewnews.php>.

⁵⁶ The Department of National Antiquity was established in 1943 by the British Colonial Governor to Tanzania, Mr. Harold McMichael. In 1940, the Department's headquarters in Dar es Salaam was named after King George V in memory of his contribution to developing this cultural and historical department. Artefacts, including materials related to women's beauty, are preserved at various cultural sites controlled by this department. Following the independence of Tanzania, the Department became known as the Tanzania National Archives. *Majira* (February 13, 2004); *Majira* (November 19, 2004).

⁵⁷ Interview with (names withheld), Dar es Salaam, 23/5/2001, 20/6/2002. See, also, Eicher (1995).



Fig: 48: Various modified forms of Maasai clothing to suite modern urban wearers. Photograph: Edward Sylvester Mombo, Dar es Salaam (2004).

Younger women, and especially educated, university students do not form part of this trend, however. Current perceptions of female students attending at the University of Dar es Salaam are summed up in the following statement: ‘The girls walk in high heels as if they are flying; they are educated, they are modern and closer to the outside world than to their national roots’.⁵⁸

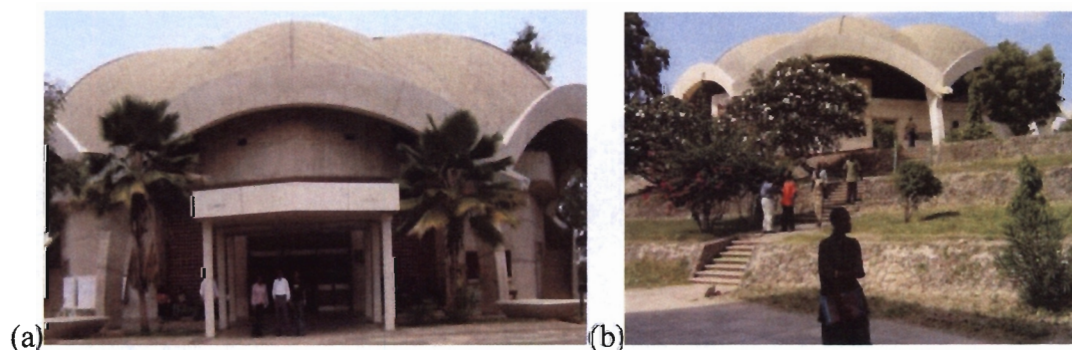


Fig: 49: (a) Front and (b) back views of Nkrumah Hall, symbolising the pro-African aims of the University of Dar es Salaam. Photographs: Edward Sylvester Mombo (2004).

⁵⁸ Interview with Mkanula, Dar es Salaam, 4/5/2001, 15/7/2002; Neema Komba, Dar es Salaam, 28/6/2001, 7/7/2002.

The University of Dar es Salaam was first established in the early 1960s.⁵⁹ But prior to the late 1970s, very few women went to study there. This trend was over-turned fairly rapidly following a decision in 1976⁶⁰ that those wishing to pursue their education at a tertiary institution would no longer be required to do the two year national service introduced following independence.

After spending only a few days at the University of Dar es Salaam, commonly known as the Hill,⁶¹ most of the female students change their appearance to conform with cosmopolitan standards of beauty, which they equate with the idea of being both sophisticated and fashionably modern (Ivaska, 2004: 110-115). Once they have regular access to the world of Internet Cafés and other aspects of the globalized media industry, these students tend to adopt contemporary international fashions and to indulge in the fast-growing habit of smoking cigarettes - habits that are actively reinforced by the reading of fashion magazines.⁶² Especially in the case of girls from rural backgrounds, these new practices are used to differentiate themselves from the rest of Tanzanian society. Their sense of superiority, forged in part by the fact that they are attending university and are therefore comparatively highly educated, also finds expression in their choice of non-traditional foods and new, seemingly sophisticated friends.

⁵⁹ UDSM started with a Faculty of Law, established in 1961 to cater for Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar. The first batch of fourteen undergraduate students, one of them being female, attended classes at the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) building. See http://www.law.udsm.ac.tz/mission/rolling_plan.pdf.

⁶⁰ Known as the 'Musoma Resolution', it was launched in Musoma Region in 1976.

⁶¹ The term 'Hill' is derived both from its hilly location and from the University of Dar es Salaam, the first university in Tanzania, not only pioneered, but is now the 'peak' of the nation's intellectual capacity.

⁶² See, also, Monaco, J. (1978); Sochen, J. (1987); Press, A. L. (1991); Sault, N. (1994); Berger, A. A. (1996); Wolf, M. J. (1999).



Fig: 50: Female students at the Internet Café. Photographs: Rehema Nchimbi, Dar es Salaam (2004).

Exposed as they are to a range of ideas and countless images from the mass media, these university students now plait their hair Rastafarian style, or shave off their hair altogether, and even adopt Maasai 'extensions'. Combined with their appropriation of global styles and trends like tattoos⁶³, these practices tend to mask economic and cultural differences between the students. On the other hand, students from wealthier families have a clear advantage over fellow students who lack Internet access at home and who are therefore forced to rely on Internet cafés for intermittent access to the latest tips on international styles and trends. In keeping with these students' pre-occupation with physical appearance, beauty salons and beauty shops are now located at every students' hall of residence.⁶⁴ In the past, students had to travel long distances to secure the services of those working at salons of this kind.

⁶³ Bewaji, J. A. I. (2003: 102) notes that: 'The old art of tattoos and various forms of bodily decorations and scarification...have been rediscovered in the West, especially in America, and is no longer dubbed barbaric mutilation of body or abuse of human body associated with the primitives, but a plastic art now performed by 'highly skilled' surgeons for which huge sums of money are paid in a commercialized medical and para-medical profession'.

⁶⁴ These beauty salons were named after the female halls of residence at where the salons were founded. Thus there was Hall One Beauty Salon, Hall Three Beauty Salon, Hall Four Beauty Salon, and Hall Seven Beauty Salon.



Fig: 51: Female University students wearing jeans. Photographs: Edward Sylvester Mombo and Rehema Nchimbi (2003 and 2004).

At least for some, spending time and money in this way can be financially rewarding since emerging business centres and particularly tourist hotels, casinos and supermarkets often use female students in their advertisements. Night clubs such as the Bilcanas, Wet and Wild, Coco Beach and Silent Inn have all set aside Thursday evenings for hosting students from the University of Dar es Salaam and from other learning institutions in the neighbourhood. On this day, which is known as a Faculty day,⁶⁵ the hosts provide free transport for students to and from their residences presumably in an effort to build up a new clientele, but also to get a chance to see first hand potential models for advertisements.⁶⁶

Since the 1990s, this pattern has been further reinforced by the introduction of the Miss Higher Learning competition and the annual Miss University Beauty pageant which was first held in 1993.⁶⁷ Initially, the participants in this pageant were only from the University of Dar es Salaam, but they now come from all higher learning

⁶⁵ This day was given this particular name because it was a students-only forum.

⁶⁶ Interview with (names withheld), Dar es Salaam, 21/6/2001.

⁶⁷ Mona Mwakalinga from the University of Dar es Salaam became the first African woman to win the title of Miss University World in 1994. See, also, <http://www.allafrica.com/stories/200407260692.html>.

institutions in the country.⁶⁸ Like other pageants elsewhere in the world, the Miss University Beauty pageant plays a powerful role in shaping young women's notions of beauty in contemporary Tanzania. But it has also led to contradictory views on the meaning and impact of this competition. On the one hand, the winner is said to be a puppet of the sponsors who lacks confidence in her own (traditional) beauty. Opponents of this pageant also point out that the only reason women acquire this title is because they are prepared to enter the competition in the first place. Since not all female students participate, the winner can therefore hardly be said to be representative of the student body. Moreover, the criteria used to judge the pageants reflect the values of a group of business people, not those of the University community.⁶⁹

In some cases, the pageant seems to undermine the aims of higher education institutions by encouraging participants to take these competitions more seriously than their studies. Thus, for example, Hoyce Temu discontinued her studies after winning the pageant in 1999.⁷⁰ Whisked abroad by the organisers of the pageant, she is said to have lacked the ability to stand up for herself, a strength of commitment to self-development that some opponents claim to be one of the qualities tertiary institutions are supposed to foster. For this reason, many believe that the Miss University winner 'is not the Hill's miss'. (In a similar vein, protesters during the 1970 Miss World

⁶⁸ Other universities established in Tanzania, include Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), the Open University of Tanzania (OUT), Herbert Kairuki Memorial University (HKMU), International Medical and Technological University (IMTU), St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), Zanzibar University (ZU), Tumaini University (TU), the University of Bukoba (UOB), and Mzumbe University. Also there are a number of University colleges and non-University Level Institutions all forming the Higher Education Institutions in Tanzania. See, also, <http://www.gotz/educationf.html>.

⁶⁹ Interview with Maria, Asia, Bashiru, Florian, University of Dar es Salaam, 10/11/2000, 15/11/2000, 23/11/2000, 18/6/2001, 26/8/2002.

⁷⁰ The University of Dar es Salaam Examination Results, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, 1999. Faraja Kotta, Miss Tanzania 2004, postponed her studies at the University of Dar es Salaam, opting instead for French courses at an institution abroad. *Majira* (Thursday October 14, 2004).

competition held placards reading: 'Mis-fortune demands equal pay for women' and 'Mis-conception demands a place outside the home'. At the time, Miss World winners were paid 30,000 British pounds a year, while the average woman's annual wage was 10 British pounds).⁷¹

Opponents of the University beauty pageant argue, further, that beauty is developed through being exposed to the kind of cultural diversity students encounter during their studies, and through learning and overcoming ignorance. To be beautiful is to be emotionally stable, to be creative, to be able to say no, to be bold, and to understand and challenge people who try to mould you for their own needs and ends. Beauty means to feel good about yourself, to dress well, to respect the rights of African women to remain in control of their own destiny, and to challenge internationally sanctioned media stereotypes. It also implies going back to one's own cultural roots.⁷²

On the other hand, those who support the pageant claim that concepts of beauty are universal. External factors such as clothing styles, physical appearance, hairstyles and the application of make-up are viewed by this group as indices of globally applicable standards of beauty. Likewise, traits such as intelligence, character, personality, creativity, morality, power of expression, talent and vision are said to be common among all beautiful women regardless of their cultural backgrounds. According to this group, female students should therefore be encouraged to participate. Miss Earth Chile 2002, Nazhla Abad, from the city of Talca, is upheld as proof that a woman can be both beautiful and intelligent. She was awarded the Avon Beauty Trophy and she won the Miss South America award, but carried on teaching at the university in

⁷¹ See <http://www.tiscali.co.uk>.

⁷² Interview with Shirima, University of Dar es Salaam, 22/11/2000, 24/6/2001, 26/8/2002.

Santiago. She received a Master in Law from Georgetown University in Washington, DC, achieved a degree in Human Rights and International Law, and has worked on women's rights issues in Tanzania.⁷³



Fig: 52:⁷⁴ Winners of the Miss Tourism from different countries of the world as they gathered at the Harare International Airport, in 2005.

In most cases, the contestants themselves participate in these competitions partly because they are keen to travel locally and internationally, partly because of the prizes offered by the organisers. These include cash, and the glamorous prospect of a free trip to the international pageant for Miss University.⁷⁵ Although in this respect, the Miss University beauty pageant is similar to many of the other beauty pageants held in contemporary Tanzania, it differs significantly from these competitions in its emphasis on testing the talents and creativity of the contestants. Thus, for example, participants are required to demonstrate that they are proficient dancers, and are also expected to provide solutions to social problems, such as disease, illiteracy, social displacement, and poverty.

⁷³ See http://www.chileancharm.com/chilean_beauty_spot.

⁷⁴ A trip like this availed the winners for the Miss University of the opportunity to visit different places in the world, the cost of which many, especially those coming from poor countries, could not afford if they were to pay from their own pockets.

⁷⁵ The first Miss University beauty pageants toured the United Nations' headquarters, the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The farewell banquet for the pageants was held at Sylvias in Harlem. See, also, <http://www.tparents.org/Unews/unws9412/pagent.htm>.

By paying lip service to the contestants' social and other skills in this way, sponsoring companies like Kibo breweries seek to promote a very distinctive public image. The marketing manager of this company is on record as saying: 'We are after mapping our credibility and perfection high at the top of the academic hill of the nation rather than counting profits in terms of monetary gains'.⁷⁶ According to Kibo breweries, sponsoring a contest like this requires courage, confidence and high ambitions. The latter reference is a play on the fact that the brewery is named after Mount Kilimanjaro. The company's marketing manager explains the relevance this association has for the competition as follows: 'There is a natural match between Kibo and Higher learning institutions, dealing with the learned is not a joke'.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Interview with (name withheld) 22/7/2000, 3/5/2001.

⁷⁷ Interview with (name withheld) 22/7/200, 3/5/2001.

CHAPTER SIX

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BEAUTY CONTESTS IN CONTEMPORARY TANZANIA

Beauty contests in Tanzania are characterised by complex, often diverse interests: the needs of the individual contestants and of the organisers, the aims of the state and the global values informing women's beauty contests, all play a role. First introduced in 1968 and initially restricted to urban areas, these contests have recently spread to rural areas. Liberalization of the media has contributed significantly to the transfer of modern, market-based beauty contests from their origins in the West to rural areas in present-day Tanzania.

Modern beauty contests in Tanzania owe their origin in part to the emergence and validation in the global fashion arena of black models. Although a relatively recent phenomenon, the acceptance by the international modelling industry of black as beautiful has seen the rise to fame of the Sudanese model, Alek Wek, Iman from Somalia, Naomi Campbell, and Nigerian, Oluchi Onweagba, and others. All have contributed significantly to fact that it is now possible for African women to seek an international career in the beauty industries run by multinational companies. Moreover, far from merely reinforcing established Western concepts of beauty, models like Alek Wek clearly challenge accepted stereotypes. As Marilyn points out: 'Alec Wek, with her gangly, awkward body, round face, decidedly African nose, deep set eyes, and jet black skin, has managed to make people sit up and ... debate on

African beauty’.¹ It is against this background that the M-Net Face of Africa beauty contest was conceived ‘to create programming that would ...foster a positive image for Africa, create new opportunities, ... and give African models a chance to achieve international success’.²

Contestants entering these competitions do so in the knowledge that some black models like Wek have become hugely successful, and have also gained recognition for other activities, notably charity work. Wek, who is a member of the U.S. Committee for Refugees’ Advisory Council, helps to raise awareness about the situation in Sudan, as well as the plight of refugees worldwide.³ Others, like Iman, described as having the ‘stealthy grace of a panther’⁴, and Naomi Campbell, provide less complete challenges to existing physical stereotypes. As Marilyn notes, she has done:

little to challenge the notions of Western beauty that many people, Africans included, have begun to assume should be universal....Pictures of Naomi have an erotic appeal that is unrivalled by other supermodels, even in the highly sexualised world of fashion photography....Her nose is not too wide, her lips not so full that they speak of Africa, and her body, long and lean...fits easily into Calvin Klein jeans.⁵

The first winner of the M-Net face of Africa competition, Oluchi Onweagba, secured a contract with Gap clothing and Ralph Lauren, and has since ‘become a familiar face to US shoppers’ despite the fact that she ‘has an impressively African nose’.⁶ Viewed against the background of this and other successes, such as that of the Tanzanian

¹ Marilyn Kimani, *The Beauty of Black*. See

<http://www.users.srobarka.sk/~tropos/websites/nrgzone/blackbeauty.html>.

² See <http://www.users.srobarka.sk/~tropos/websites/nrgzone/blackbeauty.html>.

³ See http://www.supermodelpages.com/alek_wek.

⁴ See <http://www.geocities.com/iman4636>.

⁵ See <http://www.users.srobarka.sk/~tropos/websites/nrgzone/blackbeauty.html>. See, also, <http://www.fragrancex.com/bellnaom.html>.

⁶ See <http://www.users.srobarka.sk/~tropos/websites/nrgzone/blackbeauty.html>. See, also, <http://www.blackwebportal.com/forums/viewmessages.cfm?>

model, Miriam Odemba, who in 1999 was the M-Net Face of Africa runner-up and who won the Elite Model Look beauty contests⁷, Marilyn claims that 'every beauty in the big cities of the continent under the age of 22 seems to have set her sights on being Miss Zambia, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Malawi or wherever she happens to call home'.⁸



Fig: 53: Alek Wek, Iman, Naomi Campbell, Oluchi Onweagba.

The first beauty contest held in Tanzania dates to 1968 (TNA/ACC.540/CD/CR/46). This competition was organised by a Chagga woman from the Kilimanjaro region, where educational institutions were comparatively liberal and strongly oriented to inculcating western values. This educational system was first introduced to the Chagga area in the 1880s by missionaries attracted by the comparatively temperate climate, who built schools in the Old Moshi, Umbwe and Machame areas.⁹ Here, Chagga girls were introduced to new forms of knowledge, new moral values and new

⁷ The M-Net East Africa 2000 regional finalist (whose patron is a 'Chagga', Mama Salmin Amour, the First Lady of Zanzibar) were dressed by the Tanzanian designer Kiza Kahama, Sally Karago (Kenya), Sue Wacheke Muraya (Kenya), Frederic Kashiramwe (Burundi) and Sylvia Owon (Uganda), theme for the evening was 'Africa meets the East'. See, also, <http://www.africaonline.co.zw/mirror/stage/archive/000211/weekend4463.html>.

⁸ See <http://www.users.srobarka.sk/~tropos/websites/nrgzone/blackbeauty.html>.

⁹ See <http://www.ntz.info/gen/n01734.html>.

notions of prestige based on the cultural assumptions of their European teachers. The impact this education had on women from the Chagga region was considerable. Not only did the first officially chosen national beauty queen, Theresa Shayo¹⁰, come from this area, but, given their worldly sophistication, Chagga women often managed to impress politically and economically powerful men, a trend that continues to date. For example, the current president, the prime minister and the retired president of Zanzibar are all married to Chagga women, and five out of the ten national beauty queens between 1994 and 2003 belonged to the Chagga ethnic group.¹¹

While the role of missionaries is crucial to an understanding of the role Chagga women play in contemporary Tanzanian society, the worldly sophistication commonly associated with them can probably also be attributed to the fact that the Chagga region borders on Kenya. This geographical proximity has encouraged cross-border interactions, and has also afforded the Chagga access to the international media through Kenyan television stations since the early 1960s.¹² The programmes seen on these stations, which are presented in English and which, in the colonial period, were deliberately designed to forge links between Europe and her colonies in Africa, exposed the Chagga to foreign cultural values at a time when local, Tanzanian television stations had not yet been started. Between 1961 and the late 1970s, when the Tanzanian government banned both the broadcasting of imported programmes and access to foreign TV channels (Ivaska, 2004: 107-108),¹³ people from the Chagga region were organising the first of many beauty contests held in Tanzania today.

¹⁰ *The Express* (July 17-23, 1997).

¹¹ For the reputation the Chagga enjoy as educated people, see http://absolutetanzania.com/modern_tanzania/people_of_tanzania.

¹² In 1962, Television was introduced in Kenya. English Radio Broadcasting had begun in Kenya as early as in 1928, targeting the white settlers who were monitored news from their European home countries and other parts of the world. See <http://www.kbc.co.ke>.

¹³ Also Interview with Mama Rajabu of Tanzania Audio Visual Institute (AVI), Dar es Salaam, 14/4/2001. About 'Media and Power' see Curran, J. (2002).

Alarmed by this development, the state's initial response was to ban these beauty contests on the grounds that they undermined the local national and traditional cultural norms promoted in the immediate post-independence period.

Since at that time concerted attempts were being made to revive African cultural practices that had been disrupted and undermined by colonial and missionary interventions, allowing the contest to continue would have been tantamount to abandoning a commitment to ensuring that all women participate in the state's nationalist mobilization efforts. Peoples' memories of the officially sanctioned post-independence women's dance groups, dress patterns and hair styles, all of which carried powerful political messages that had a significant impact on the promotion of nationalist values, are a vivid reminder of how radically the Tanzanian state's concerns have changed since then. As one woman who took part in the struggle for independence pointed out, '...we did not start by wearing all sorts of expensive clothes and gold and whatever; we started as humble, simple peasant women, representative of the rural poor of this country'.¹⁴ In this political climate, beauty contests were regarded as inconsistent with peoples' moral and political values. In fact, they were considered altogether indecent and entirely inappropriate.

During this period, however, the Tanzanian government was also promoting gender equity through policies aimed at revising the educational system, health care and the economy, all of which placed special emphasis on women's rights. As part of this drive, the rights of association and public participation in political and other debates were actively encouraged among women in both urban and rural areas. Together with

¹⁴ Interview with Binti Zawadi, Dar es Salaam, 2/5/2001, 20/5/2001.

the liberalisation policies introduced in the mid-1970s, (Havnevik, 1993), and the loosening up of controls over media and various service industries in the years thereafter, this emphasis on changing the status of women has had unforeseen consequences. Today, young, self-confident women who benefited from this focus on women's rights commonly work in industries that promote global commodities and services. Most have completely lost the commitment women once had to opposing the colonial legacy and other external influences.

In keeping with the spirit of empowering women economically in terms of the Structural Adjustment Policies introduced in the late 1980s (Reed, 1996), the government provided funding for women to start small cooperative businesses that enabled poorer women to set up independent food vending and other stalls. Some wealthier, more educated female entrepreneurs used the opportunities afforded by these policies to open up hair salons and to organise fashion shows that were officially sanctioned for the first time in 1986. This development can be attributed to designers Farida, Gwao and Baby Baruti,¹⁵ educated women who own boutiques in Dar es Salaam, both of whom began to sell clothing and perfumes imported mainly from Paris, Germany, England and America in the course of the 1980s. Both also employed young girls of between 14 and 20 to display and advertise these new imported fashions, and to test the market for their own designs at public shows. For some of the reasons outlined below by Chapkis (1986:97), age played a major role in the employment of women in this burgeoning industry:

A model can go into different stages in her career, she can go from the Seventeen look into Glamour/Mademoiselle and then into Vogue/Harper's Bazaar...Timing is very important in business...After

¹⁵ *The Express* (July 17-23, 1997).

thirty...a lot of them get married...They can't do this for their whole life. It is short lived. Models have to earn in ten years what other people can take forty to earn...It is a very glamorous business, but it is also a very difficult one.

Normally, the early fashion shows took place in hotels such as the Kilimanjaro Hotel, which hosted the first Tanzanian beauty contest in 1968, and the New Africa Hotel and Hotel Embassy (TNA/ACC. 540/CD/CR/46/ Re: LGRD/B.1/1/6), all of which were considered suitably modern venues that would attract wealthy customers from diverse backgrounds. In most cases, these shows were accompanied by live music performed by local bands such as the Kilimanjaro Connection,¹⁶ which drew large audiences who came to enjoy not only the shows, but the drink, food and dancing that became a feature of these spectacular events. As the result, the fashion and entertainment industries in Dar es Salaam began to forge increasingly close links with one another.



Fig: 54: Models during a fashion show held in Dar es Salaam in 2003.

¹⁶ Interview with Mama Rajabu, Dar es Salaam, 14/4/2001; John Kitime, Dar es Salaam, 3/6/2002.

The boutique business also formed links¹⁷ with the media because journalists were often involved in initiating these shows or because relatives of these designers worked in this field. These links are still evident to this day, for journalists associated with public and private media institutions commonly act as the principal coordinators for beauty contests held in particular wards, districts and zones. In 2002, for example, a female journalist¹⁸ working for the 'Majira' newspaper coordinated the Miss Kigamboni competition. According to her, her participation was motivated by the fact that it was financially very lucrative to organise competitions like these which entice financially very attractive sponsorship from the commercial sector.

This involvement of media personalities in the organization of beauty contests at grass-root levels in rural areas has encouraged fierce opposition among those who question this development. It has been argued, for example, that rural areas are no longer safe from the influence of foreign cultural values because these media personalities actively promote beauty contests through the media. Serious questions have also been raised about the role these coordinators play in promoting commercial beauty products that serve their own commercial interests in the glamorous world of fashion and make-up. Through their dress, hairstyles, use of make-up and way of speaking, young female journalists in Tanzania have become powerful role models for girls attracted to the world of fashion and entertainment. In many cases, these journalists have adopted American-English accents, which are now also common among aspiring beauty queens, who emulate globally successful media icons not only in dress, but also in speech, and even in gesture and body language.

¹⁷ As Chapkis (1986:42) notes, there is an intimate relationship between the media and companies manufacturing/producing items of beauty.

¹⁸ Interview with Jesca, Dar es Salaam, 29/5/2001, 12/6/2002.

In 2003, this growing interest in beauty pageants took on an entirely new dimension when the FM-Magic radio station organised the ‘Miss *ChuChuChu*’¹⁹ beauty pageant for girls between the ages of three and six. This event was advertised extensively by the newspapers, TV and radio stations. Christine Magesse, the 2002 winner of the Miss Tanzania beauty contest, who coordinated the show, promoted competition criteria similar to those adopted for Miss Tanzania beauty contest. The Miss *ChuChuChu* has thus become a kind of apprenticeship for the Miss Tanzania contest, laying a firm base for very particular conceptions of women’s beauty in the increasingly cosmopolitan environment of contemporary Dar es Salaam. Assisted by the media, the once highly protected social and cultural spheres of young children have been swamped by new values that have contributed significantly to the erosion of any on-going commitment to local cultural practices. One of the questions put to these ‘Chuchuchu’ contestants was: ‘What would you like to be when you grow up?’. They all mentioned things like working in the contemporary beauty industry. None appeared to have any interest in other career trajectories or the promotion of indigenous concepts of beauty.



Fig: 55: Girls on stage during a Miss *Chu-Chu-Chu* beauty pageant 2004.

¹⁹ In 1960, the first international pageant for children, which was named ‘Little Miss Universe’, was staged in Miami, Florida. It was however discontinued in 1966. See, also, http://www.pageantcenter.com/pageant_history.html.

Fashion shows for adult women, such as the Farida Fashion show, the Lulu Fashion show, Miss Mirinda and the Gwao Fashion show have all played a significant role in promoting beauty contests, which raises a number of interesting questions regarding the state's on-going efforts to control the beauty industry despite indications that it is becoming increasingly difficult to do so. Although the government first adopted a wait-and-see attitude to these shows, once fashion models - viewed on TV by thousands of people - began to appear in one-piece swimsuits (which are incorrectly referred to as bikinis in Tanzania), there was an outcry from those demanding that they be banned, which actually happened in 1990.²⁰ However, intense lobbying from the organizers, who claimed that the shows enhanced the economic power of women, soon softened the government's attitude to them. In 1992, these fashion shows were consequently reintroduced on condition that swimming costumes would not be worn on stage. By then, the shows had become like beauty pageants, promoting both designer clothing and the glamorous models who wore their garments.



Fig: 56: Models introducing a fashion show in Dar es Salaam, 2003.

²⁰ Interview with the National Coordinator of the Miss Tanzania Beauty Contest, Dar es Salaam, 10/4/2001, 13/4/2001, 2/6/2002; Laurence Hinju and Jackson Kalikuntima, 6/4/2001, 13/4/2001.

Soon thereafter, in 1994, the Whitesands Hotel officially re-introduced the Miss Tanzania beauty contest which had also been banned in 1990. The Minister for Tourism and Natural Resources, Juma Hamad Omar, was a guest of honour, at this event. Other dignitaries included the Chief of the Defence Force, and the Principal Secretary and his wife, Mama Rupia, who was one of the judges.²¹ The competition was won by Aina Maeda, a young Chagga woman who had just returned to Tanzania from the United States.

The state's decision to ban swimming costumes from fashion shows and beauty pageants in the early 1990s proved very problematic for the contestants themselves, however, in particular those who ended up attending international beauty contests where they were expected to wear swimming costumes, but were generally totally unprepared for this aspect of these competitions. Not surprisingly, for this and other reasons, it became increasingly difficult for the state to sustain the contradictory double standards it had adopted in the face of criticism against these beauty contests.

In 1997, the government's inability to manage this situation encouraged it to rethink its ban on swimming costumes. Agreeing that the wearing of costumes was acceptable, the Minister of Education and Culture now insisted on banning bikinis at all national beauty contests. He claimed at the time that: 'we cannot imitate other

²¹ *The Express* (July 17-23, 1997). See, also, the judges for 2004 Miss and Mr. University (MMU) World pageant which included the former First Lady of the Republic of Belarus, Hon. Hamilton Green, former Prime Minister of Guyana, Mrs. Ludmilla Tichon and the President, Sun Moon University and Chairperson of MMU Korea Dr. Kyung June Lee, who said of the winner: 'Very statuesque lady at her age who not only has beauty but what we call the X-factor that is to convey the best message on how we could make a change in the world'. See <http://www.tparents.org/UNews/Unws9412/pageant.htm>.

cultures now in decay; the aim is to come up with a national policy, the use of bikinis is already voted out by my Ministry'.²²

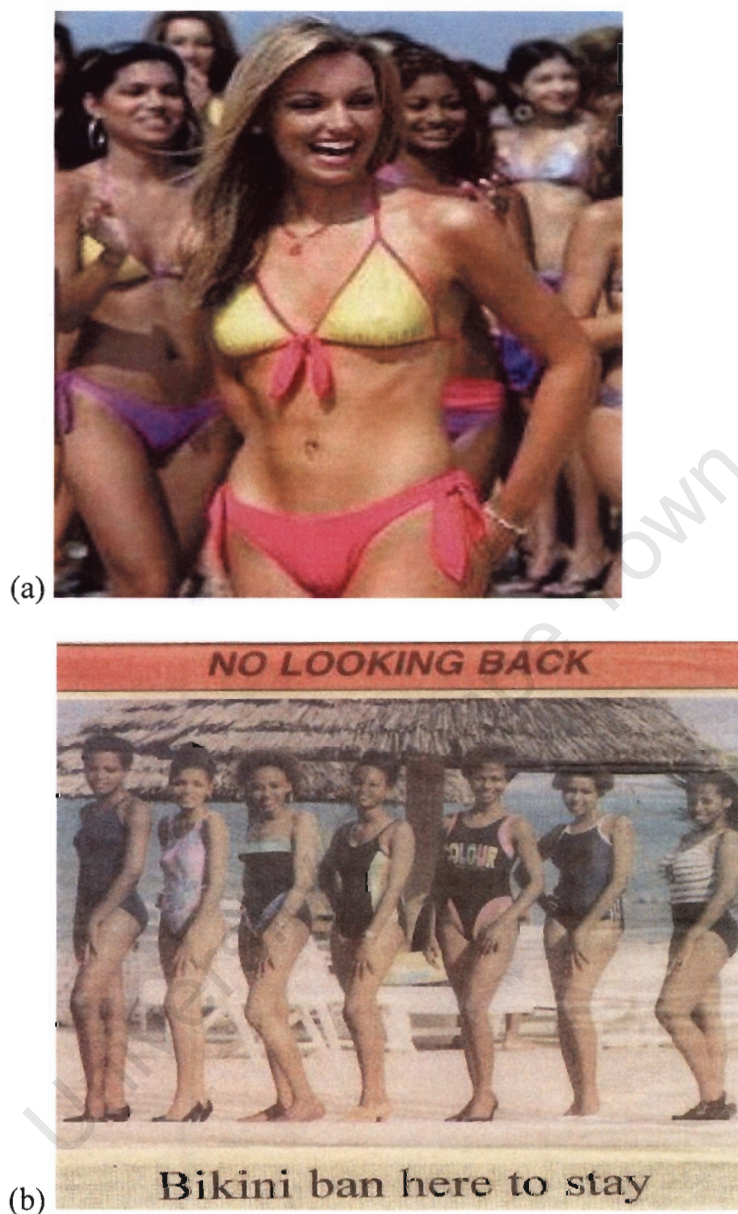


Fig: 57: (a) Contestants at the Miss World beauty pageant wearing 'bikinis', from www.missworld.tv/beautyWithAPurpose and (b) their counterparts in Tanzania who are banned from wearing 'bikinis' during such events. *The Express*, September 18-24, 1997.

In contrast to this position, the Minister for Labour and Youth Development argued that there was nothing wrong with the use of bikinis as long as beauty pageants were

²² *The Express* (September 18-24, 1997).

regarded as culturally acceptable. He did, however, qualify this statement by adding: 'Bikinis are part and parcel of beauty pageants, but since they are against our culture they should be worn to be seen by the judges only, because the beauty contests carry the name of Tanzania across the borders'.²³ In 1999, the government again forbade all beauty contests following a decision by the organisers for Miss East Africa 1998, Kings International Promoters, to include bikinis in that contest.²⁴



Fig: 58:²⁵

But pressure from commercial companies involved in tourism, the hotels and liquor trade, and the car sales industry forced it to rescind the ban in the same year. According to Emily Adolf, the winner of the 1995 Miss Tanzania Beauty pageant:

The government should refrain from frustrating the organisers of Miss Tanzania Beauty Pageant by giving odd rules which are not recognised by the organisers of Miss World...Now how can the judges determine

²³ *The Express* (September 18-24, 1997).

²⁴ *Majira* (February 25, 1999); *Rai* (February 25-March 3, 1999); *Lete Raha* (March 21- 27, 1999).

²⁵ The newspaper cuttings reflect the two sharply conflicting positions between the government, which insisted on the ban of 'bikinis', and that of the sponsors cum organizers of the Miss East Africa beauty pageants, who were in favour of these 'bikinis'.

who is more beautiful than the rest if paraded on the runway all covered up...the swimming suits is simply a must.²⁶

Since then, national beauty contests have taken place annually, and the wearing of the bikinis has become a firmly entrenched aspect of these competitions.

The complex contradictions that have accompanied the history of these contests have not been confined to the state, however, for some ordinary people have also been against them, while others have consistently supported these pageants. The opponents of these beauty contests argue that they do not improve the lives of the beauty contestants; instead, they serve the needs and interests of the sponsors and organizers. According to these observers, local beauty contests are no more than manifestations of the growing trans-national media-based cultural industry centred around the consumer values of industrialized nations. As such, they ultimately serve the interests of the globalized entertainment industry, which promotes a very particular idea of culture in the international media. Ultimately, therefore, these competitions erode local values that play a crucial role in upholding social and cultural barriers that might otherwise protect the nation from foreign cultural penetration.²⁷

In addition, those opposing the pageants are of the opinion that beauty contests reinforce very narrow cultural expectations and understandings of women, gender and sexuality that serve to promote commodities associated with the global beauty industry.²⁸ As such, these competitions exploit women who end up supporting the global expansion of certain industries through commercial endorsements and publicity

²⁶ *The Guardian* (July 19, 1997).

²⁷ Interview with Mwanaheri and Sion, Dar es Salaam, 8/4/2001, 9/4/2001; 19/6/2001, 10/7/2002.

²⁸ As Bennett-Weiser laments: 'Regardless of all her other achievements, she (a woman) is a failure if she is not beautiful'. See <http://www.melborne.indymedia.org/news/2003/11/58023.php>.

appearances. They further assert that beauty contests promote an exotic or alien image of ideal womanhood that denies the fact that beauty is a moral value, not something that can be purchased, or simply applied to the body's surface. They also argue that the common standards promoted by these competitions fly in the face of evidence suggesting that concepts of beauty actually differ from one country to another, and from one area or region to another. This view was voiced by Angela Damas,²⁹ the Pilsner Ice Miss Tanzania 2002 winner, who claimed that it would take more than a decade before a representative from Tanzania is sufficiently conversant with international expectations to win the Miss World title. She also noted that the country of origin of the contestant, the international reputation of her sponsoring company and the status of her country in the global political arena are all relevant to the possible success of contestants: 'Very little is known about Tanzania globally'.

Supporters of beauty contests include some non-governmental organisations and a number of female activists.³⁰ They argue that women participating in these competitions have the democratic right to do so. Interfering with the contests therefore infringes on the personal freedom of all women. These competitions, they say, often leads to employment opportunities, and the contests generally enhance the contestants' communication skills and their ability to present themselves favourably in a variety of situations, including the educational field for those wishing to pursue

²⁹ Interview with Angela Damas, Dar es Salaam, 19/8/2003, 22/8/2003. See, also, <http://www.missworld.tv/2004Preview> where the following statement may be found: 'Beauty can take many forms and be judged in so many ways: the way you look, how you behave, how you perform. But true beauty can only be a combination of these things-that's what makes a real Miss world'.

³⁰ Interview with Nuru Mpombo, 13/4/2001, 17/8/2003. In contrast to this, Indian women's rights activists and feminists protested against the objectification of women during beauty contests. In 1996, thousands of protesters surrounded the location where the competition was staged, and more than 10,000 state troops were deployed to 'enforce order'. See <http://www.tiscali.co.uk>. See, also, <http://www.expressindia.com>.

further studies.³¹ Furthermore, these beauty contests function as a modern secular ritual that serves to harness the skill and powers of young women trying to negotiate life in a contemporary, cosmopolitan world.

The emergence of these beauty contests has also led some observers to suggest that it provides a way of creating a greater sense of commonality between people from different walks of life and different communities. Instead of merely favouring the rich and already powerful, they afford opportunities for upward social mobility, even though most competitions demand an entrance fee from the contestants as well as the spectators. According to Mariam, who owns the Executive Beauty Salon located in the centre of Dar es Salaam: 'The entrance fees are of different rates, but, eventually the entire spectators share, enjoy and are influenced by same and common cultural course of action'.³² In other words, some people believe that the competitions contribute to a new sense of pride and belonging or identity that brings together Tanzanians from all walks of life.

These beauty contests would obviously not have been allowed if the government hadn't created an environment conducive to attracting foreign investors and had not withdrawn from actively managing the economy and policing society. For the state, beauty contests have even become a reliable source of taxes. This helps to explain why it has recently expressed public support for beauty contests, ironically now praising their role in promoting Tanzanian culture and in contributing to the publication of Tanzania's tourist sector abroad. In keeping with this new trend, the Minister for Tourism declared the young Tanzanian model, Tausi Likokola, an

³¹ See, also, <http://www.compas-tz.com/old/ANSmissy.htm> Emily Adolph, Miss Tanzania 1995, married and studied in Italy after acquiring the title.

³² Interview with Mariam, Dar es Salaam, 27/4/2001, 17/6/2002.

honorary ambassador tasked with promoting Tanzanian tourism in Germany, USA, France and Belgium.³³ Tausi is an acclaimed international figure who jets between Europe and America.



Fig: 59:³⁴

Winners of both Miss Tanzania and Miss Tourism are now also encouraged to promote tourism in the country's national parks and for Mount Kilimanjaro, which has long been a symbol of tourism in Tanzania because of its status as the highest peak in Africa. A case in point is Witness Manwingi, who was a representative of Tanzania at the 2005 Miss Tourism World Pageant, held in Zimbabwe, and who won the title of Miss Tourism Africa.³⁵ According to John Singh, the founder and president of Miss Tourism World Pageant, participants also help to promote the image of the host country:

I do not see how all these girls would fail to project the correct image of Zimbabwe after having been here. When they go back to their respective countries, each one of them will hold a reception where she will talk about Zimbabwe...We can't change the past but we can change the future. While there is nothing we can do about the negative reports the media has written about Zimbabwe before now, the Miss

³³ See <http://www.afritopic.com/afritopic-tausi-likokola.htm>.

³⁴ Pictures of Tausi Likokola; Coordinator for Miss Tourism Tanzania presenting the national flag to Witness Manwingi before the latter left for Zimbabwe, and Miss Czech Republic, the 19-year-old high school student, Zuzana Putnarova, who won the 2005 Miss Tourism World pageant.

³⁵ See <http://www.bcstimes.com/majira/printable.php?category=2&newsID=4547>.

Tourism World pageant will change the future of Zimbabwean tourism...the reigning queen visits Zimbabwe regularly, hold conferences, tour media organisations and make contact with mayors of different cities including the Mayor of London.³⁶

The reigning Miss Tourism World, Zuzana, echoed these sentiments when she said that: 'I do not see how tourism in this country would fail to attract more visitors' She also added: 'I will work with magazines and television stations...to talk about the ...Zimbabweans, their peaceful nature and hospitality'.³⁷

Fig: 60: An advertisement that appeared ahead of the Miss Tourism Tanzania pageant in *Mwananchi* newspaper, 2004.³⁸

³⁶ See <http://www.allafrica.com/stories/printable/200503010098.html>.

³⁷ See <http://www.allafrica.com/stories/printable/200503010098.html>.

³⁸ See *Mwananchi* (1 December, 2004).

The government has also come round to accepting that the beauty contests encourage economic growth. Because beauty contestants need clothes, cosmetics and training, the competitions stimulate domestic investments in the textile industries, and in pharmaceutical and cosmetics factories, and open up employment opportunities in the advertising and other industries. The establishment of local factories associated with the burgeoning cosmopolitan beauty industry has reduced the cost of importing beauty products manufactured in foreign countries.³⁹ In this respect, the industry differs significantly from gym centres that still import all their gear from abroad. Even their manuals of instruction are replicas of similar manuals from elsewhere in the world. (Economic dependence of this kind is also evident in the college for hair design run by Kenyan-born Grace Githinji, discussed in Chapter Five, which uses programmes from England obtained from the City and Guilds of London Institute).⁴⁰

The gradual shift in local attitudes to beauty contests can be ascribed, further, to the fact that many have become associated with humanitarian interests.⁴¹ Plagued by disasters like HIV/AIDS that result in millions of orphans, Tanzania now benefits from the funds the Miss Tanzania competition secures from various donors to assist the victims of this pandemic. Other stakeholders in these competitions have also become involved in solving social problems like drug abuse, alcoholism and disease.⁴² These developments have all contributed to a growing conviction among Tanzanians that the commoditisation of beauty is not necessarily as evil as it might appear to

³⁹ Soaps, body creams, ornaments and accessories of beauty are manufactured locally in Tanzania mainly by people from Asian backgrounds.

⁴⁰ *Majira* (September 19, 2002).

⁴¹ The supposed humanitarian concerns of these pageants has also been criticized, however. See <http://www.melbourne.indymedia.org/news/2003/11/58023.php>.

⁴² By the end of December 1994, the Miss University Pageant had sent aid to Rwanda, including medical equipment and medicines valued over \$500,000. See <http://www.tparents.org/UNews/unws9412/pageant.htm>.

those who are troubled by the impact this commodification has had on indigenous cultural values.



Fig: 61 :⁴³

The ambivalent response of those who waver between acceptance and non-acceptance of these beauty contests has opened a gap for the consolidation of the contests, and for their spread to rural areas. After 1994, numerous beauty contests began to appear in small towns, on street corners and even in liquor stores. This proliferation is evidenced in the fact that there is now a Miss Temeke, a Miss Kigogo, a Miss Ukonga, a Miss *Kwa Macheeni* and a Miss *Malaika* competition, among others. Even pageants like the Miss *Uchochoroni* contest based in remote rural areas has now been recognized by both the government and the national organizers of beauty pageants who have set up a hierarchy of contests throughout the country.⁴⁴

⁴³ Pictures showing, (a) Tausi Likokola and a group of orphans in Namibia where this Tanzanian Model launched the AIDS Trust Fund. In Tanzania, the Tausi AIDS Fund has sponsored infomercials every hour on national TV, as well as radio programmes. A similar trust has been set up in South Africa. (b) Witness Manwingi, Miss Tourism Africa 2005, holding a child when she visited the centre for Child Survival and Development Foundation, in Harare, Zimbabwe, to which she donated 200,000 Zimbabwe Dollar. See, also, <http://www.afritopic.com/afritopic-tausi-likokola.htm>. See, also, <http://www.africapulse.org.za/index.php>. See, also, <http://www.bcstimes.com>.

⁴⁴ *Lete Raha* (21-27, March, 1999). See, also, TNA/ACC.540/CD/CR/46/ Kumb. Prm/11. The Commissioner of Culture suggested that regional contests should be held in order to ensure that the girl selected to represent Tanzania in Miss world truly reflects the whole of Tanzania.



Fig: 62: 2003 – (a) Miss Msasani and (b) the Miss Dar City Centre pageants winners.

Ironically, some of these outlying competitions now deviate from international standards by encouraging nudity, as occurred with the Miss Mara pageant in 2003.⁴⁵ And whereas previously, high-ranking government leaders challenged the emergence of all competitions of this kind, many now use these contests as a resource, building their political image by attending glamorous pageants as guests of honour.⁴⁶



Fig: 63: The Minister for Foreign Relations presenting an ignition key to the winner of the 2001 Miss Tanzania beauty pageant.

⁴⁵ Interview with Epsion Luhwago, a journalist, Dar es Salaam, 11/5/2001, 18/6/2002, 21/8/2003.

⁴⁶ *Dimba* (August 31- September 6, 1996).

Despite the growing acceptance of the pageants, Tanzania's Islamic community remains strongly opposed to competitions of this kind. In its view, beauty contests are dedicated to making money, endorsing Western (Christian) cultural norms and have contributed to the revival of a kind of cultural colonisation, while at the same time undermining Islamic moral values.⁴⁷ These sentiments encouraged the Muslim wife of the former President to prevent her daughter from participating in a beauty contest in 1997. At the same time however, she agreed to be the guest of honour at this contest in support of her husband's political and social responsibilities as the president of Tanzania.⁴⁸

Contradictions and conflicts like these are also apparent in the fact that some participants from Zanzibar, which is an overwhelmingly Islamic community, had to 'use' Christian names in order to participate in beauty contests.⁴⁹ Over a third of Tanzania's current population is Muslim, but for historic reasons this population is concentrated in specific regions, notably the coastal areas and Zanzibar, where Arab traders first began to convert local inhabitants in the 6th century. During the colonial period, traditional Islamic authorities were used to support the colonial infrastructure despite the fact that Christianity was promoted through the establishment of religious schools and churches run by missionaries. Islam consequently survived, even though it was not actively encouraged or promoted.

The contradictory behaviour of contemporary Tanzanian Muslims is also evident in the actions of high-ranking Islamic officials such as the Chief Minister and other

⁴⁷ According to El Guindi, F. (1999: 137) Muslim women are '...not to reveal their *zina*...except in the presence of those who are in a position in which sexual relations are legitimate'.

⁴⁸ *Majira* (July 21, 1998); *Dimba* (August 31-September 6, 1997).

⁴⁹ Interview with Thomas Mbega, Dar es Salaam, 11/5/2001, 7/6/2002, 2/8/2003.

Ministers who have attended beauty contests either as guests of honour or as part of the audience, and in the fact that the national coordinator of the Tanzanian competition is Muslim. Major sponsors for this and other contests are also from Islamic families, among them are owners of the Aspen cigarette company and Tanzania Breweries, while East African Melody, group from Zanzibar that performs *taarab* music, organised the Miss Melody beauty contest which was won by Fatuma Awadh, an Islamic employee at the Air Tanzania Corporation. The team of judges for this contest included Mr. Nassor Born City, the principal judge, who comes from an Islamic background.⁵⁰

As this suggests, individual interests often merge with those of powerful multinational companies that are capable of resisting, penetrating and overcoming apparently strict cultural and religious sanctions against these competitions. This merging of interests is evidenced, further, in the experience of Irene Ngowi, a student at a Military secondary school who won the Face of M-Net competition in 2001, who was allowed to by-pass the school's military regulations. A form three student at the time, she plaited her hair in different styles and wore open, high-heeled shoes, neither of which is acceptable at her school. She was also given free accommodation at her school, and the school administration paid for the special diet she ate before the competition, as well as the costs incurred in preparing for the contest.⁵¹

Tanzania's main beauty pageant appears to be run by a private organization known as Lino Agency International that is linked to the entertainment industry, and is involved in the promotion and advertising of local and foreign commodities such as alcohol,

⁵⁰ *Dimba* (August 31-September 6, 1997).

⁵¹ Interview with Irene's school mates, Editha, Mariam, Rehema and Edward, Dar es Salaam, 2/6/2002. See, also, <http://www.melbourne.indymedia.org/news/2003/11/58023.php>

cigarette, cosmetics and the clothing industry. Before the contest, the participants undergo training under an appointed instructor who has twice been brought from abroad, but is normally the outgoing beauty queen. The participants are put up at an expensive hotel that in most cases participates as a sponsor for that year's beauty contest. While resident at this hotel, the contestants are given instructions on how to smile and walk, and they practice wearing swimming costumes so that they won't feel embarrassed when they have to walk in front of the public on the day of the competition. During this orientation period their bodies are also checked for scars or any other unwanted blemishes. This orientation is witnessed and monitored by the national coordinator, the sponsors and the appointed judges, all of whom must ensure that the culminating event is a resounding commercial success.

No special criteria are set down for the appointed judges, who are generally male, though there have been a few exceptions to this practice. Some of these judges, as well as others involved in the competitions, benefit directly from these pageants. Thus, for example, a female judge for the 2002 national beauty contest was the proprietor of two local bands, *Twanga Pepeta* and African Revolution, one of which performed at the event.⁵² Participants are judged in terms of a variety of criteria, including poise, general appearance and interviewing skills; in other words, criteria that have become common in the international arena. The winner of the Miss Tanzania beauty contest represents the country in the annual Miss World Beauty Pageant.

⁵² Interview with Shirima, George, Sumbai, and Kakana, Dar es Salaam, 5/5/2001, 7/5/2001, 9/6/2002, 19/6/2002.

Once crowned as a beauty queen, the winner is expected to represent the competition's sponsoring institutions. She therefore has to engage in various social activities aimed at enhancing the public image of the sponsors, such as the preservation of the environment, visiting foreign countries on their behalf, and even appearing in advertisements. In this way, the beauty queens also secure funds for charities on behalf of their corporate sponsors. Miss Pilsner Ice 2003 and Miss Temeke 2004 both⁵³ raised funds for lunches for street children from the *Dogodogo* Centre in Dar es Salaam and the *Yatima* Group Trust Fund in Dar es Salaam, for AIDS orphanages in Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Dodoma and Lindi, and for a maternity ward in Dar es Salaam. They ate, drank and danced with the children; they donated soap, detergents and money, and their photographs were taken for newspaper and television features that provided free coverage for them and their sponsors, who were all praised for their selfless commitment to public causes. On these occasions, the outgoing regional and national winners normally accompany the current holder of the title dressed in T-shirts and scarves carrying emblems of the sponsoring company or companies seeking to enhance their public image through charitable work. Coca-Cola has been one of the leading sponsors associated with this kind of publicity.

But this complex relationship between public responsibility and promoting the national image of commercial companies is not always as simple or straight-forward as the sponsors try to suggest. Beauty contests are sometimes marred by disputes and corruption.⁵⁴ Some girls are known to have friends on the jury, while others actively cultivate the organizers of the contest during preparations for the final event. During the Miss Ilala Beauty Contest of 2001, the organizers battled to agree on who should

⁵³ *Majira* (March 01, 2004); *Majira* (April 14, 2004).

⁵⁴ *Dimba* (August 3-9, 1997).

be allowed to participate. Similar battles have erupted when judges promise participants assistance with getting to the final stage of the competition. Miss Lake Zone 2004 exposed this practice in public, pointing out that lobbying leads to corruption during the final judgement.⁵⁵ Because of this corruption, knowing who is in the jury, who is the main sponsor of the contest, and which of the girls have powerful people behind them, usually makes it relatively easy to predict who the winner might be.

These competitions are further marred by the dubious morality of some of the contestants and the fact that many fail to apply themselves to attaining crucial life skills. Some beauty contestants have been known to forge their qualification for these beauty pageants. For example, as early as 1957, Miss United States of America, Leona Gage, had to resign after her mother-in-law decided to inform the press that the 18-year-old Gage was not only married to an Air Force sergeant, but was also a mother of two small sons. Gage admitted at the time that: ‘She entered the competition to earn prize money to supplement their family’s military salary’.⁵⁶ Other beauty contestants are known to have had affairs with married men, mostly rich and prominent members of the community who have connections that are potentially useful to the contestants.⁵⁷ Likewise, contestants enrolled for university degrees and other courses often under-perform once they enter these competitions. In one Tanzanian case, a contestant failed to attain a single mark in her advanced level examinations.⁵⁸ This helps to explain why, in another case, that of Miss Tanzania

⁵⁵ *Majira* (September 22, 2004).

⁵⁶ See *Spoti* (November 29- December 5, 1998); [Http://www.pageantcenter.com/pageant_history.html](http://www.pageantcenter.com/pageant_history.html)

⁵⁷ A similar incidence occurred in 1973 with Marjorie Wallace, the first American to be named Miss World, who was stripped of her title after rumours of affairs with a string of famous bachelors. See http://www.pageantcenter.com/pageant_history.html.

⁵⁸ *Spoti* (November 29-December 5, 1998).

1995, Emily Adolph - the first secondary school student to win the country's title – her school decided to suspend her for participating in the competition, which it also deemed immoral for school girls at her level.⁵⁹ Viewed against the background of more traditional concepts of beauty, many Tanzanians consequently regard these competitions as totally farcical.

The naming of particular beauty contests is the preserve of the sponsoring organization. Once a company sponsors a contest, the winner carries the company's name. Thus one now has such names as Miss Aspen Tanzania, Miss Pilsner Ice Tanzania, Miss Red Bull, Miss Dar City Centre and Miss Oceanic Sandals. In the Kilimanjaro region, one competition equates the beauty queen with Mount Kilimanjaro, the Peak of Natural Beauty. This competition, which takes place among the Chagga, provides a forum for reinforcing the Chagga claim to greater beauty, a perception that has been nurtured through the award of other beauty titles to Chagga woman since the inception of competitions of this kind.

The prizes offered to winners vary from one competition to another. Normally, the winner gets a car carrying an emblem representing the major sponsoring company. Thus, for example, the car presented to the Miss Oceanic Sandals Tanzania had the company's logo on both sides. Other prizes depend on the sponsoring organization, but cellular phones, mattresses, air tickets, computers, free accommodation at hotels, free access to beauty saloons, TV sets and radio cassettes are common. Some winners are offered opportunities to further their studies, especially in mastering computer

⁵⁹ See <http://www.compass-tz.com/old/ANSmissy.htm>.

programmes and in learning foreign languages. It is also common for these winners to be absorbed into the media industry and other businesses.⁶⁰



Fig: 64: (a) 1997 - Miss Aspen Tanzania and (b) 2002 - Miss Pilsner Ice Tanzania.



Fig: 65: Mount Kilimanjaro.

The impression that beauty provides access to wealth, travel, employment, and educational opportunities is not necessarily correct, however. Winners regularly complain that they have been cheated by the sponsors, who give them inferior quality items and fail to meet the obligations they agreed to in the media. In some cases,

⁶⁰ Loveness Chacha, Magreth Mmari, Rosemina Mollel, Jeniffer Patric, Regina Joseph, Amina Machuro, and Bukasa Mwakapala were employed by Kashn Car Muscat company, which has branches in Dar es Salaam (*Majira*, January 31, 2004).

disputes regarding the promises made to the contestants are so serious that they end up in court.⁶¹



Fig: 66: A car won by 2004 Miss Ocean Sandals Tanzania.

Sponsors probably benefit far more from these competitions than the contestants themselves. Some contests consequently have five or more sponsors working together to achieve maximum promotion for their products.⁶² Thus, for example, the Suzuki car offered as a prize to Miss Pilsner Ice Tanzania, 2002, established an association between the supposedly glamorous world of the winner, the ownership of an expensive vehicle, and the consumption of beer. Life style advertisements like these commonly rely on the idea that beauty provides access to wealth and, even, power. As more people become interested in watching television programmes of the contestants during their orientation period, hosted in tourist hotels and on their beaches, these hotels get to be known, often leading to an increase in local custom.

As this short history of local beauty pageants demonstrates, the recent proliferation of beauty contests in contemporary Tanzania has unleashed contradictory responses, not only from ordinary people, but also from the government. Thus, for example, while

⁶¹ *Majira* (June 30, 2004).

⁶² Ocean Sandals, Pilsner Ice, Multichoice Tanzania, the Golden Tulip Hotels, Habari Cooperation, and KP Dotnata Catering were among the sponsors for the Miss Pilsner Ice beauty pageant, in 2004. See *Alasiri* (14/7/2004).

state officials seem to find it difficult to reconcile the contests with the government's commitment to eradicating female oppression and exploitation, they also concede that these competitions benefit the country financially, partly through the taxes paid by companies sponsoring these events, partly because the pageants attract publicity that helps to promote tourism. Caught between its social responsibility to women, on the one hand, and the need to raise revenue, on the other hand, but also knowing that its capacity to intervene in the activities of large corporations is becoming increasingly limited, the state is gradually withdrawing from this arena. As a result, local beauty competitions are becoming more and more like those organised in other centres across the world.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION



Fig: 67: Miss Tanzania 1999, sponsored by the Aspen Cigarette Company.

This study on women's beauty in the history of Tanzania has explored various conceptions of beauty in the precolonial, colonial and postindependence periods. Focusing on both rural and urban case studies, it evaluated transformations in local notions of beauty, taking into account crucial social, cultural and economic factors, as well as, more recently, the global dissemination of values, ideas and products to women seeking to make themselves more beautiful in contemporary urban contexts.

The recent internationalisation of concepts of beauty through beauty pageants and contests provides what is probably the clearest indication of how radically indigenous concepts of beauty have been challenged and transformed through the impact of this

globalized beauty industry. As I have demonstrated at various points in my discussion of this history of beauty in Tanzania, these pageants differ in significant respects from the displays of beauty found in pre-colonial societies, where moral and reproductive considerations either took precedence over, or formed part of an integrated consideration of beauty as the product of, not only physical, but also other factors. Recent pageants sponsored by local and multinational companies have emphasized the physical, popularizing notions of attractiveness based on contemporary Western ideals that fly in the face of the long-established indigenous tendency to value obesity as a sign of both wealth and fertility. Commenting on this radical shift, one observer pointed out recently that Miss Tanzania needs a figure that is 'wolf-like, wafer-thin, flat chest(ed), razor-hipped and (with) no curves'.¹

The transformation of women into objects of display gazed upon by anonymous audiences and used by companies to advertise and promote their products has virtually nothing in common with traditionalist displays of beauty, which served to build communal relations and, in some cases, also cross-cultural connections. Yet these contemporary displays of beauty have, of course, also encouraged a new sense of connectedness, in this case to a trans-national, cosmopolitan, media-based consumer culture.

Throughout this thesis, my aim has been to maintain a focus on, not only the complex factors informing notions of beauty in different contexts and at different times, but also the ways in which these notions became increasingly hybridised through cross-cultural interactions in urban and other contexts. Ironically, though, this increasingly fluid

¹ *The Sunday Observer* (June 14, 1997).

integration of seemingly incompatible values and ideas has also contributed to a fragmentation of the body, evidenced in the contemporary tendency to compartmentalize women's bodies into different sections. In contemporary Tanzania, therefore, it has become very common for people to use phrases like *mwanamke wowowo*, *mwanamke khanga*, *mwanamke zege*, *mwanamke usafiri*, *mwanamke deki*, *mwanamke mkorogo*, *mwanamke ulimi*, *mwanamke shule*, and *mwanamke gold* in reference to women's bodies. Literally translated, these phrases comment on diverse aspects of a woman's appearance such as her buttocks, *khanga*, hair, and legs. But they also include references to cleanliness, use of language and education, concepts of beauty that suggest a residual attention to values that were once central in more traditional contexts.

As this study has revealed, because concepts of beauty are influenced by social, economic and cultural relations, they obviously change from one context to another. Thus, for example, in contrast to contemporary contexts, where beauty is commonly equated with youth, in the past, and in more traditionalist contexts, attention to beauty was a life-long preoccupation and was believed to unfold gradually over time. Here, cultural divisions of labour and the sexual and reproductive roles ascribed to women played a determining role in perceptions of female beauty, explaining the attention these communities gave to attributes such as the size of a woman's breasts, waist, hips, and legs, and other aspects such as her height, age, health, weight and colour. The emphasis they placed on additional attributes like moral values, intellectual competence, and competence in singing and dancing led to the development of holistic notions of beauty that have been all but lost in the contemporary urban hub of cities like Dar es Salaam.

Despite this radical shift in focus, one of the most interesting findings of this thesis is the extent to which earlier, pre-colonial concepts and practices have survived in, and have also been adapted to new needs and new situations. The resistance, in particular of the Maasai, to contemporary global notions of beauty, has allowed them to take on new roles in Tanzania's modern economy, both through their contact with tourists seeking to meet exotic 'primitives' and among women in urban centres like Dar es Salaam, where their hair plaiting skills have opened up hitherto unimaginable opportunities for employment. Recent developments like these are all the more remarkable given the Maasai struggle for survival during both the colonial and post-colonial periods.

As my account of the Maasai, and other aspects of this thesis suggest, the 20th century history of beauty in Tanzania is inextricably linked to the country's struggle for independence, the subsequent villagisation programmes and the banning of materials for beauty and beauty contests. Linked to the post-independence preoccupation with fostering a sense of pride in Tanzania's African identity and heritage, these developments had a huge impact, not only on notions of female beauty, but also on a new sense of connectedness to a larger (African) world. In this sense, the post-independence period paved the way for the next phase in which a larger, global arena came to play an increasingly important role.

The liberalisation policies of the 1980s, which emphasised the principles of an open market economy, are obviously crucial to this history. These policies, and especially the

legalisation of second-hand clothing and other products (*mitumba*), facilitated an easy flow to Tanzania of foreign cultural materials and ideas that merged with local form, making it increasingly difficult to define clear boundaries between indigenous and imported concepts of beauty.

Yet, as I have also indicated, the Tanzanian government has found it extremely difficult to reconcile the gradual breakdown of longestablished indigenous notions of beauty with its self-appointed responsibility to fight female oppression and exploitation. The contradictory implications of its recent efforts to intervene in urban beauty pageants to this end was brought home when Emily Adolf, Miss Tanzania 1995, reported that ‘I now earn my daily bread decently, thanks to the recognition I won after clinching the Ms Tanzania’.² As this suggests, contemporary beauty contests have gained popularity in part because they afford previously unimaginable opportunities for travel and employment, and the shift away from more traditionalist notions of beauty has in many cases been influenced by pragmatic considerations that will no doubt continue to play a role in the on-going transformation of concepts of female beauty in contemporary Tanzanian society.



² *The Guardian* (July 15, 1997).

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A LIST OF RESPONDENTS

Abbreviations:

MoEd&Cult	Ministry of Education and Culture
TZ	Tanzania
BASATA	Baraza la Sanaa Tanzania
RTD	Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam
AVI	Audio Visual Institute
MMU	Miss and Mr University Pageant
UDSM	University of Dar es Salaam
Inst.	Instructor
F	Female
M	Male

A: MBUGWE: Interviews were conducted in 2000 between August and September, in 2001, between January and February, and in 2002 between January and March. Some respondents chose to remain anonymous.

1. Magdalena Move Ndee	55yrs	F	Mwada
2. Catherine Moyo Bungeya	68yrs	F	Mwada
3. Domitila Kaku Dako	70yrs	F	Mwada
4. Maria Njae	73yrs	F	Mwada
5. Francisca Laurent Ninga	60yrs	F	Mwada
6. Marian M. Gidaa	66yrs	F	Mwada
7. Fides Konoko	75yrs	F	Mwada
8. Elizabeth William Hondi	52yrs	F	Mwada
9. Selina Tarya Gonyanya	62yrs	F	Mwada
10. Pailina M. Chuchu	51yrs	F	Mwada
11. Makrina Rangi Kebola	65yrs	F	Mwada
12. Stella Francis Isdori	48yrs	F	Mwada

13. Edeltruda Logo	48yrs	F	Mwada
14. Margaretha Joseph	60yrs	F	Sangaiwe
15. Mzee Mbuo Isunga	78yrs	M	Mwada
16. Martin Siganda Kemweri	83yrs	M	Burunge
17. Blasi Gicha	70yrs	M	Sangaiwe
18. Peter Lubuva	72yrs	M	Sangaiwe
19. Epimack Michael	45yrs	M	Sangaiwe
20. Reginald Mosaito	62yrs	M	Sangaiwe
21. Peter Motambi	73yrs	M	Sangaiwe
22. Thomas Sivin Shishe	77yrs	M	Sangaiwe
23. Joseph Maria Mombo	60yrs	M	Sangaiwe
24. Elias Jomba	62yrs	M	Sangaiwe
25. Marcel Mareja	71yrs	M	Sangaiwe
26. Bedda Shauri	57yrs	M	Sangaiwe
27. Dedi Mombo	64yrs	M	Sangaiwe
28. Daranga Dagey	67yrs	M	Sangaiwe
29. Jomba Yasso	63yrs	M	Sangaiwe
30. Thomasi Marende	70yrs	M	Sangaiwe
31. Michael Motori	70yrs	M	Sangaiwe
32. Pius Morembwa	80yrs	M	Mwada
33. Ndege Shignida	75yrs	M	Mwada
34. Mosukuma Salaye	65yrs	M	Mwada
35. Patrick Kenda	59yrs	M	Mwada
36. Joseph Morusha	42yrs	M	Mwada
37. Fidelis Shota Dida	53yrs	M	Mwada
38. Joseph Marki Moba	65yrs	M	Mwada
39. Francis Gere Boyoda	61yrs	M	Mwada
40. Eliya Chondo	78yrs	M	Kisangaji
41. Lucas Eliya	50yrs	M	Kisangaji
42. Njala Lilo	60yrs	M	Kisangaji
43. Nemani Motakaiko	81yrs	M	Mawe Mairo
44. Nsimba Nkereri	77yrs	M	Mawe Mairo
45. Zakayo Mariva	88yrs	M	Mdori/Vilima
Vitatu			

46. Francis M. Mombo Jerumani	72yrs	M	Mbuyu wa
47. Benge Kengetu	66yrs	M	Magugu
48. Godyfrid Thomas Kasi	63yrs	M	Magugu
49. E. E. J. Ngahugha		M	Magugu

B. ARUSHA: Interviews were conducted in October 2000, March 2001, and between April and May, 2002. Some respondents chose to remain anonymous.

1. Maglas	40yrs	M	Mbauda
2. Juma Laizer	65yrs	M	Ngarenarok
3. Molel	40yrs	M	Mbauda
4. Ngoisa Oile Neil Yang	42yrs	M	Endulel Monduli
5. Motejo Ole	60yrs	M	Engarash
6. El Moloimet	40yrs	M	Engoiki(Monduli)
7. Mollel Laltaika	55yrs	M	Kisongo
8. Mzee Walii Charema	56yrs	M	Bondeni
9. Rev Fr. Kitomari	60yrs	M	Sanawari
10. Samweli Ernest	21yrs	M	Bondeni
11. Manase Israel	30yrs	M	Bondeni
12. Clifford Zacharia.	22yrs	M	Sanawari
13. Mzee Lewanga	50yrs	M	Sanawari
14. Moses Jamakwea	75yrs	M	Bondeni
15. Paul and Group	25-45yrs	M	Bondeni
16. Mama Baby	52yrs	F	Bondeni
17. Mama John	59yrs	F	Ngarenarok
18. Mama Michael	63yrs	F	Clock Tower
19. Mama Mwajabu	50yrs	F	Pangani
20. Mama Asha Neema Ally	45yrs	F	Archivist
21. Asha and Mary Peter Secondary	19yrs&20yrs	F	Enaboishu
22. Mary Mollel (Teacher)	50yrs	F	Ngaranarok

23. Mama Maeda	65yrs	F	Sanawari
24. Mama Kadudu	67yrs	F	Levolosi
25. Mama Maria	50yrs	F	Unga-Limited
26. Mama Rajabu	50yrs	F	
27. Mama Soka	60yrs	F	
28. Mama Mlay	50yrs	F	Sanawari
29. Hill Top Salon and Boutigue			
30. Sion	60yrs	F	Monduli
31. Naishiye (Mama Mary)	50yrs	F	Sinon
32. Nanginyi	35yrs	F	Sinon

C. DAR ES SALAAM: Interviews were conducted in November 2000, between April and June, 2002, between June and August, 2002 and between March and May, 2003. Some respondents chose to remain anonymous.

1. Mzee Rashidi Masimbi	60yrs	M	MoEd&Cult.
2. Hashim Lundenga TZ	44yrs	M	Coordinator Miss
3. Laurence Mosses Hinju	40yrs	M	BASATA
4. Jackson Kalikumtima	40yrs	M	BASATA
5. Albert G. Makoye	38yrs	M	Travel Consultant
6. Hassan Muhidini	-----	M	For The Guardian
7. Swedi Mwinyi	-----	M	RTD
8. Marketing Manager Kibo Breweries	-----	M	
9. Thom Mbega	-----	M	Journalist
10. Epson Luhwago	-----	M	Journalist
11. Amani Kakana	35yrs	M	Coordinator MMU
12. -----	36yrs	M	Boutique
13. -----	29yrs	M	Gym Instructor
14. -----	53yrs	M	Shop keeper
15. Henry Tandau	48yrs	M	Pharmacist
16. John Kitime	48yrs	M	Musician

17. Sumbai Ntandu	35yrs	M	Lecturer
18. Oswald Masebo	35yrs	M	Lecturer
19. Sion Nnko	45yrs	F	Education Officer
20. Dorine Awiti	20yrs	F	Student Mzizima
21. -----	28yrs	F	Student Jangwani
22. -----	27yrs	F	Teacher
23. -----	32yrs	F	Boutique
24. Mariam, S.	35yrs	F	Beauty Saloon
25. -----	26yrs	F	Beauty Saloon
26. Neema Komba	30yrs	F	Hall Warden
27. Mkanula, H.	40yrs	F	Admission Officer
28. Mama Tandau	-----	F	Activist
29. Shani Kitogo	35yrs	F	Kitchen Party Inst.
30. Mama Mtu Mzima	48yrs	F	Kitchen Party Inst.
31. Mama Rajabu	-----	F	AVI
32. Mwanaheri	34yrs	F	Beauty Saloon
33. Nuru Mpombo	30yrs	F	Boutique
34. Bi Shukuru	-----	F	Mwananyamala
35. Binti Zawadi	70yrs	F	Mwananyamala
36. Jesca	28yrs	F	Majira News
Paper			
37. Editha, Rehema, Mariam, Edward F/F/F/M Secondary students			
38. Gwantwa		F	Student Tumaini
University			
39. Angela Damas		F	Miss Tanzania 2002
40. Paulina, K.		F	Student UDSM
41. Violet Mhando		F	Student UDSM
42. Anna Fungameza		F	Student UDSM
43. Hope Gwimile		F	Student UDSM
44. Anastazia Mwisombe		F	Student UDSM
45. Anneth Komba		F	Student UDSM
46. Pamela Richard		F	Student UDSM
47. Maria Emmanuel		F	Student UDSM
48. Ester Ndenje		F	Student UDSM

49. Rehema Chande	F	Student UDSM
50. Grace Mbwilo	F	Student UDSM
51. Asia Mohamed	F	Student UDSM
52. Skola Ambilikile	F	Student UDSM
53. Andendekisye, C.	M	President UDSM
54. Mashaka, M.	M	Student UDSM
55. Kusaja, J.	M	Student UDSM
56. Florian, K.	M	Student UDSM
57. Bashiru, A.	M	Student UDSM
58. Rasul, M.	M	Student UDSM
59. Francis Mosongo	M	Student UDSM
60. Shirima, F.	M	Student UDSM
61. George, A.	M	Student UDSM